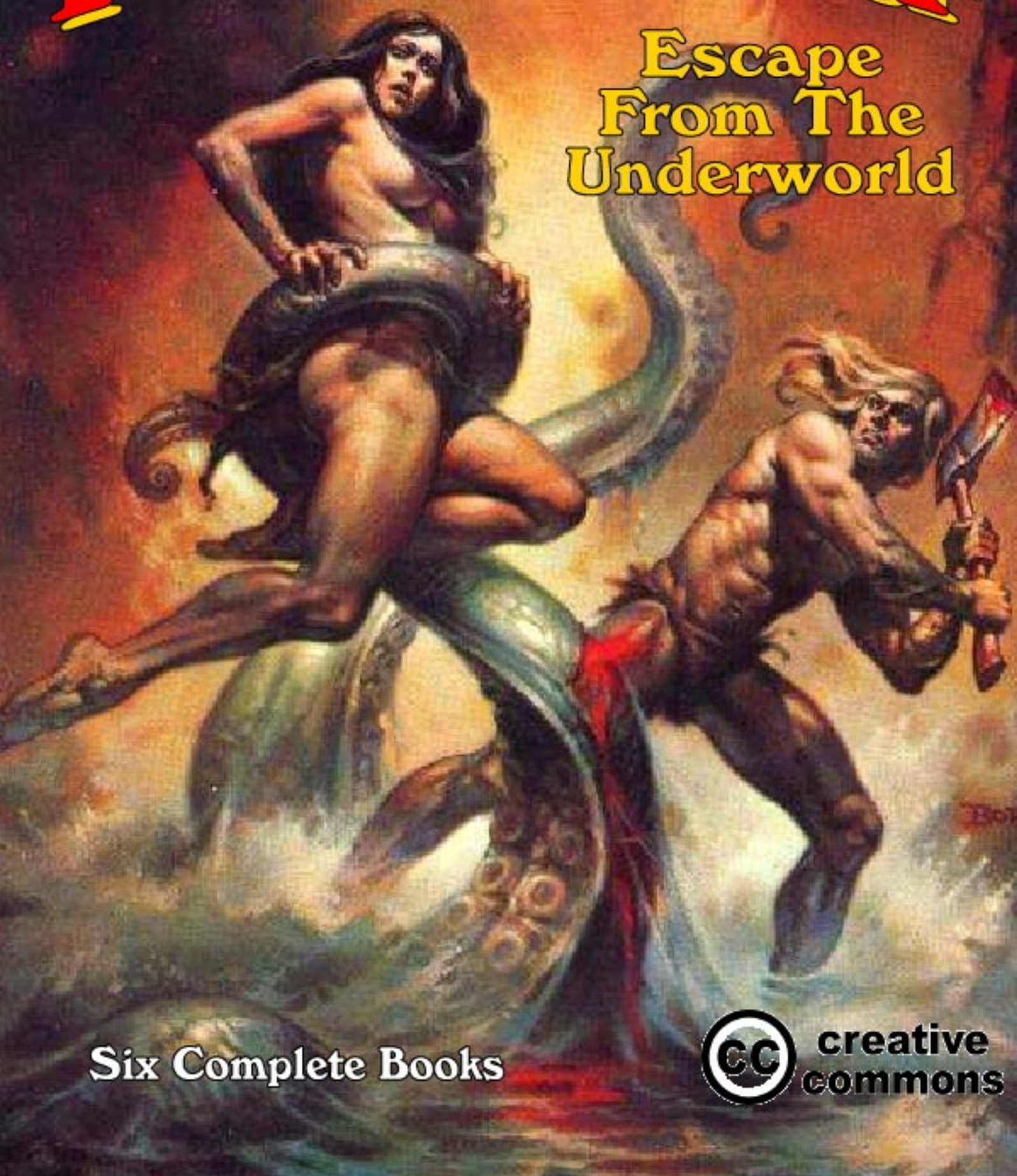


2

567 Pages

Pellucidar

Escape
From The
Underworld



Six Complete Books



creative
commons

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD



PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

DISCLAIMER



Work licensed under a Creative Commons license is governed by applicable copyright law. This allows Creative Commons licenses to be applied to all work falling under copyright, including: books, plays, movies, music, articles, photographs, blogs, and websites. Creative Commons splits these works into two categories, one of which encompasses self-published books.

This information is in the public domain and may be found in various formats on the internet and is presented here for educational purposes.

No copyright is claimed, none is pending and none is sought.

Reasonable free use applies.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

It must have been a little after three o'clock in the afternoon that it happened—the afternoon of June 3rd, 1916. It seems incredible that all that I have passed through—all those weird and terrifying experiences—should have been encompassed within so short a span as three brief months. Rather might I have experienced a cosmic cycle, with all its changes and evolutions for that which I have seen with my own eyes in this brief interval of time—things that no other mortal eye had seen before, glimpses of a world past, a world dead, a world so long dead that even in the lowest Cambrian stratum no trace of it remains. Fused with the melting inner crust, it has passed forever beyond the ken of man other than in that lost pocket of the earth whither fate has borne me and where my doom is sealed. I am here and here must remain.

After reading this far, my interest, which already had been stimulated by the finding of the manuscript, was approaching the boiling-point. I had come to Greenland for the summer, on the advice of my physician, and was slowly being bored to extinction, as I had thoughtlessly neglected to bring sufficient reading-matter. Being an indifferent fisherman, my enthusiasm for this form of sport soon waned; yet in the absence of other forms of recreation I was now risking my life in an entirely inadequate boat off Cape Farewell at the southernmost extremity of Greenland.

Greenland! As a descriptive appellation, it is a sorry joke—but my story has nothing to do with Greenland, nothing to do with me; so I shall get through with the one and the other as rapidly as possible.

The inadequate boat finally arrived at a precarious landing, the natives, waist-deep in the surf, assisting. I was carried ashore, and while the evening meal was being prepared, I wandered to and fro along the rocky, shattered shore. Bits of surf-harried beach clove the worn granite, or whatever the rocks of Cape Farewell may be composed of, and as I followed the ebbing tide down one of these soft stretches, I saw the thing. Were one to bump into a Bengal tiger in the ravine behind the Bimini Baths, one could be no more surprised than was I to see a perfectly good quart thermos bottle turning and twisting in the surf of Cape Farewell at the southern extremity of Greenland. I rescued it, but I was soaked above the knees doing it; and then I sat down in the sand and opened it, and in the long twilight read the manuscript, neatly written and tightly folded, which was its contents.

You have read the opening paragraph, and if you are an imaginative idiot like myself, you will want to read the rest of it; so I shall give it to you here, omitting quotation marks—which are difficult of remembrance. In two minutes you will forget me.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

My home is in Santa Monica. I am, or was, junior member of my father's firm. We are ship-builders. Of recent years we have specialized on submarines, which we have built for Germany, England, France and the United States. I know a sub as a mother knows her baby's face, and have commanded a score of them on their trial runs. Yet my inclinations were all toward aviation. I graduated under Curtiss, and after a long siege with my father obtained his permission to try for the Lafayette Escadrille. As a stepping-stone I obtained an appointment in the American ambulance service and was on my way to France when three shrill whistles altered, in as many seconds, my entire scheme of life.

I was sitting on deck with some of the fellows who were going into the American ambulance service with me, my Airedale, Crown Prince Nobbler, asleep at my feet, when the first blast of the whistle shattered the peace and security of the ship. Ever since entering the U-boat zone we had been on the lookout for periscopes, and children that we were, bemoaning the unkind fate that was to see us safely into France on the morrow without a glimpse of the dread marauders. We were young; we craved thrills, and God knows we got them that day; yet by comparison with that through which I have since passed they were as tame as a Punch-and-Judy show.

I shall never forget the ashy faces of the passengers as they stampeded for their life-belts, though there was no panic. Nobs rose with a low growl. rose, also, and over the ship's side, I saw not two hundred yards distant the periscope of a submarine, while racing toward the liner the wake of a torpedo was distinctly visible. We were aboard an American ship—which, of course, was not armed. We were entirely defenseless; yet without warning, we were being torpedoed.

I stood rigid, spellbound, watching the white wake of the torpedo. It struck us on the starboard side almost amidships. The vessel rocked as though the sea beneath it had been upturned by a mighty volcano. We were thrown to the decks, bruised and stunned, and then above the ship, carrying with it fragments of steel and wood and dismembered human bodies, rose a column of water hundreds of feet into the air.

The silence which followed the detonation of the exploding torpedo was almost equally horrifying. It lasted for perhaps two seconds, to be followed by the screams and moans of the wounded, the cursing of the men and the hoarse commands of the ship's officers. They were splendid—they and their crew. Never before had I been so proud of my nationality as I was that moment. In all the chaos which followed the torpedoing of the liner no officer or member of the crew lost his head or showed in the slightest any degree of panic or fear.

While we were attempting to lower boats, the submarine emerged and trained guns on us. The officer in command ordered us to lower our flag, but this the captain of the liner refused to do. The ship was listing frightfully to starboard, rendering the port boats useless, while half the starboard boats had been demolished by the explosion. Even while the passengers were crowding the starboard rail and scrambling into the few boats left to us, the submarine commenced shelling the ship. I saw one shell burst in a group of women and children, and then I turned my head and covered my eyes.

When I looked again to horror was added chagrin, for with the emerging of the U-boat I had recognized her as a product of our own shipyard. I knew her to a rivet. I had superintended her construction. I had sat in that very conning-tower and directed the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

efforts of the sweating crew below when first her prow clove the sunny summer waters of the Pacific; and now this creature of my brain and hand had turned Frankenstein, bent upon pursuing me to my death.

A second shell exploded upon the deck. One of the lifeboats, frightfully overcrowded, swung at a dangerous angle from its davits. A fragment of the shell shattered the bow tackle, and I saw the women and children and the men vomited into the sea beneath, while the boat dangled stern up for a moment from its single davit, and at last with increasing momentum dived into the midst of the struggling victims screaming upon the face of the waters.

Now I saw men spring to the rail and leap into the ocean. The deck was tilting to an impossible angle. Nobs braced himself with all four feet to keep from slipping into the scuppers and looked up into my face with a questioning whine. I stooped and stroked his head.

“Come on, boy!” I cried, and running to the side of the ship, dived headforemost over the rail. When I came up, the first thing I saw was Nobs swimming about in a bewildered sort of way a few yards from me. At sight of me his ears went flat, and his lips parted in a characteristic grin.

The submarine was withdrawing toward the north, but all the time it was shelling the open boats, three of them, loaded to the gunwales with survivors. Fortunately the small boats presented a rather poor target, which, combined with the bad marksmanship of the Germans preserved their occupants from harm; and after a few minutes a blotch of smoke appeared upon the eastern horizon and the U-boat submerged and disappeared.

All the time the lifeboats has been pulling away from the danger of the sinking liner, and now, though I yelled at the top of my lungs, they either did not hear my appeals for help or else did not dare return to succor me. Nobs and I had gained some little distance from the ship when it rolled completely over and sank. We were caught in the suction only enough to be drawn backward a few yards, neither of us being carried beneath the surface. I glanced hurriedly about for something to which to cling. My eyes were directed toward the point at which the liner had disappeared when there came from the depths of the ocean the muffled reverberation of an explosion, and almost simultaneously a geyser of water in which were shattered lifeboats, human bodies, steam, coal, oil, and the flotsam of a liner’s deck leaped high above the surface of the sea—a watery column momentarily marking the grave of another ship in this greatest cemetery of the seas.

When the turbulent waters had somewhat subsided and the sea had ceased to spew up wreckage, I ventured to swim back in search of something substantial enough to support my weight and that of Nobs as well. I had gotten well over the area of the wreck when not a half-dozen yards ahead of me a lifeboat shot bow foremost out of the ocean almost its entire length to flop down upon its keel with a mighty splash. It must have been carried far below, held to its mother ship by a single rope which finally parted to the enormous strain put upon it. In no other way can I account for its having leaped so far out of the water—a beneficent circumstance to which I doubtless owe my life, and that of another far dearer to me than my own. I say beneficent circumstance even in the face of the fact that a fate far more hideous confronts us than that which we escaped that day; for because of that circumstance I have met her whom otherwise I never should have known;

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I have met and loved her. At least I have had that great happiness in life; nor can Caspak, with all her horrors, expunge that which has been.

So for the thousandth time I thank the strange fate which sent that lifeboat hurtling upward from the green pit of destruction to which it had been dragged—sent it far up above the surface, emptying its water as it rose above the waves, and dropping it upon the surface of the sea, buoyant and safe.

It did not take me long to clamber over its side and drag Nobs in to comparative safety, and then I glanced around upon the scene of death and desolation which surrounded us. The sea was littered with wreckage among which floated the pitiful forms of women and children, buoyed up by their useless lifebelts. Some were torn and mangled; others lay rolling quietly to the motion of the sea, their countenances composed and peaceful; others were set in hideous lines of agony or horror. Close to the boat's side floated the figure of a girl. Her face was turned upward, held above the surface by her life-belt, and was framed in a floating mass of dark and waving hair. She was very beautiful. I had never looked upon such perfect features, such a divine molding which was at the same time human—intensely human. It was a face filled with character and strength and femininity—the face of one who was created to love and to be loved. The cheeks were flushed to the hue of life and health and vitality, and yet she lay there upon the bosom of the sea, dead. I felt something rise in my throat as I looked down upon that radiant vision, and I swore that I should live to avenge her murder.

And then I let my eyes drop once more to the face upon the water, and what I saw nearly tumbled me backward into the sea, for the eyes in the dead face had opened; the lips had parted; and one hand was raised toward me in a mute appeal for succor. She lived! She was not dead! I leaned over the boat's side and drew her quickly in to the comparative safety which God had given me. I removed her life-belt and my soggy coat and made a pillow for her head. I chafed her hands and arms and feet. I worked over her for an hour, and at last I was rewarded by a deep sigh, and again those great eyes opened and looked into mine.

At that I was all embarrassment. I have never been a ladies' man; at Leland-Stanford I was the butt of the class because of my hopeless imbecility in the presence of a pretty girl; but the men liked me, nevertheless. I was rubbing one of her hands when she opened her eyes, and I dropped it as though it were a red-hot rivet. Those eyes took me in slowly from head to foot; then they wandered slowly around the horizon marked by the rising and falling gunwales of the lifeboat. They looked at Nobs and softened, and then came back to me filled with questioning.

"I—I—" I stammered, moving away and stumbling over the next thwart. The vision smiled wanly.

"Aye-aye, sir!" she replied faintly, and again her lips drooped, and her long lashes swept the firm, fair texture of her skin.

"I hope that you are feeling better," I finally managed to say.

"Do you know," she said after a moment of silence, "I have been awake for a long time! But I did not dare open my eyes. I thought I must be dead, and I was afraid to look, for fear that I should see nothing but blackness about me. I am afraid to die!

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Tell me what happened after the ship went down. I remember all that happened before—oh, but I wish that I might forget it!” A sob broke her voice. “The beasts!” she went on after a moment. “And to think that I was to have married one of them—a lieutenant in the German navy.”

Presently she resumed as though she had not ceased speaking. “I went down and down and down. I thought I should never cease to sink. I felt no particular distress until I suddenly started upward at ever-increasing velocity; then my lungs seemed about to burst, and I must have lost consciousness, for I remember nothing more until I opened my eyes after listening to a torrent of invective against Germany and Germans. Tell me, please, all that happened after the ship sank.”

I told her, then, as well as I could, all that I had seen—the submarine shelling the open boats and all the rest of it. She thought it marvelous that we should have been spared in so providential a manner, and I had a pretty speech upon my tongue’s end, but lacked the nerve to deliver it. Nobs had come over and nosed his muzzle into her lap, and she stroked his ugly face, and at last she leaned over and put her cheek against his forehead. I have always admired Nobs; but this was the first time that it had ever occurred to me that I might wish to be Nobs. I wondered how he would take it, for he is as unused to women as I. But he took to it as a duck takes to water. What I lack of being a ladies’ man, Nobs certainly makes up for as a ladies’ dog. The old scalawag just closed his eyes and put on one of the softest “sugar-wouldn’t-melt-inmymouth” expressions you ever saw and stood there taking it and asking for more. It made me jealous.

“You seem fond of dogs,” I said.

“I am fond of this dog,” she replied.

Whether she meant anything personal in that reply I did not know; but I took it as personal and it made me feel mighty good.

As we drifted about upon that vast expanse of loneliness it is not strange that we should quickly become well acquainted. Constantly we scanned the horizon for signs of smoke, venturing guesses as to our chances of rescue; but darkness settled, and the black night enveloped us without ever the sight of a speck upon the waters.

We were thirsty, hungry, uncomfortable, and cold. Our wet garments had dried but little and I knew that the girl must be in grave danger from the exposure to a night of cold and wet upon the water in an open boat, without sufficient clothing and no food. I had managed to bail all the water out of the boat with cupped hands, ending by mopping the balance up with my handkerchief—a slow and backbreaking procedure; thus I had made a comparatively dry place for the girl to lie down low in the bottom of the boat, where the sides would protect her from the night wind, and when at last she did so, almost overcome as she was by weakness and fatigue, I threw my wet coat over her further to thwart the chill. But it was of no avail; as I sat watching her, the moonlight marking out the graceful curves of her slender young body, I saw her shiver.

“Isn’t there something I can do?” I asked. “You can’t lie there chilled through all night. Can’t you suggest something?”

She shook her head. “We must grin and bear it,” she replied after a moment.

Nobbler came and lay down on the thwart beside me, his back against my leg, and I

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

sat staring in dumb misery at the girl, knowing in my heart of hearts that she might die before morning came, for what with the shock and exposure, she had already gone through enough to kill almost any woman. And as I gazed down at her, so small and delicate and helpless, there was born slowly within my breast a new emotion. It had never been there before; now it will never cease to be there. It made me almost frantic in my desire to find some way to keep warm and cooling lifeblood in her veins. I was cold myself, though I had almost forgotten it until Nobbler moved and I felt a new sensation of cold along my leg against which he had lain, and suddenly realized that in that one spot I had been warm. Like a great light came the understanding of a means to warm the girl. Immediately I knelt beside her to put my scheme into practice when suddenly I was overwhelmed with embarrassment. Would she permit it, even if I could muster the courage to suggest it? Then I saw her frame convulse, shudderingly, her muscles reacting to her rapidly lowering temperature, and casting prudery to the winds, I threw myself down beside her and took her in my arms, pressing her body close to mine.

She drew away suddenly, voicing a little cry of fright, and tried to push me from her.

"Forgive me," I managed to stammer. "It is the only way. You will die of exposure if you are not warmed, and Nobs and I are the only means we can command for furnishing warmth." And I held her tightly while I called Nobs and bade him lie down at her back. The girl didn't struggle any more when she learned my purpose; but she gave two or three little gasps, and then began to cry softly, burying her face on my arm, and thus she fell asleep.

Toward morning, I must have dozed, though it seemed to me at the time that I had lain awake for days, instead of hours. When I finally opened my eyes, it was daylight, and the girl's hair was in my face, and she was breathing normally. I thanked God for that. She had turned her head during the night so that as I opened my eyes I saw her face not an inch from mine, my lips almost touching hers.

It was Nobs who finally awoke her. He got up, stretched, turned around a few times and lay down again, and the girl opened her eyes and looked into mine. Hers went very wide at first, and then slowly comprehension came to her, and she smiled.

"You have been very good to me," she said, as I helped her to rise, though if the truth were known I was more in need of assistance than she; the circulation all along my left side seeming to be paralyzed entirely. "You have been very good to me." And that was the only mention she ever made of it; yet I know that she was thankful and that only reserve prevented her from referring to what, to say the least, was an embarrassing situation, however unavoidable.

Shortly after daylight we saw smoke apparently coming straight toward us, and after a time we made out the squat lines of a tug—one of those fearless exponents of England's supremacy of the sea that tows sailing ships into French and English ports. I stood up on a thwart and waved my soggy coat above my head. Nobs stood upon another and barked. The girl sat at my feet straining her eyes toward the deck of the oncoming boat. "They see us," she said at last. "There is a man answering your signal." She was right. A lump came into my throat—for her sake rather than for mine. She was saved, and none too soon. She could not have lived through another night upon the Channel; she might not have lived through the coming day.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The tug came close beside us, and a man on deck threw us a rope. Willing hands dragged us to the deck, Nobs scrambling nimbly aboard without assistance. The rough men were gentle as mothers with the girl. Plying us both with questions they hustled her to the captain's cabin and me to the boiler-room. They told the girl to take off her wet clothes and throw them outside the door that they might be dried, and then to slip into the captain's bunk and get warm. They didn't have to tell me to strip after I once got into the warmth of the boiler-room. In a jiffy, my clothes hung about where they might dry most quickly, and I myself was absorbing, through every pore, the welcome heat of the stifling compartment. They brought us hot soup and coffee, and then those who were not on duty sat around and helped me damn the Kaiser and his brood.

As soon as our clothes were dry, they bade us don them, as the chances were always more than fair in those waters that we should run into trouble with the enemy, as I was only too well aware. What with the warmth and the feeling of safety for the girl, and the knowledge that a little rest and food would quickly overcome the effects of her experiences of the past dismal hours, I was feeling more content than I had experienced since those three whistle-blasts had shattered the peace of my world the previous afternoon.

But peace upon the Channel has been but a transitory thing since August, 1914. It proved itself such that morning, for I had scarce gotten into my dry clothes and taken the girl's apparel to the captain's cabin when an order was shouted down into the engine-room for full speed ahead, and an instant later I heard the dull boom of a gun. In a moment I was up on deck to see an enemy submarine about two hundred yards off our port bow. She had signaled us to stop, and our skipper had ignored the order; but now she had her gun trained on us, and the second shot grazed the cabin, warning the belligerent tug-captain that it was time to obey. Once again an order went down to the engine-room, and the tug reduced speed. The U-boat ceased firing and ordered the tug to come about and approach. Our momentum had carried us a little beyond the enemy craft, but we were turning now on the arc of a circle that would bring us alongside her. As I stood watching the maneuver and wondering what was to become of us, I felt something touch my elbow and turned to see the girl standing at my side. She looked up into my face with a rueful expression. "They seem bent on our destruction," she said, "and it looks like the same boat that sunk us yesterday."

"It is," I replied. "I know her well. I helped design her and took her out on her first run."

The girl drew back from me with a little exclamation of surprise and disappointment. "I thought you were an American," she said. "I had no idea you were a—a—"

"Nor am I," I replied. "Americans have been building submarines for all nations for many years. I wish, though, that we had gone bankrupt, my father and I, before ever we turned out that Frankenstein of a thing."

We were approaching the U-boat at half speed now, and I could almost distinguish the features of the men upon her deck. A sailor stepped to my side and slipped something hard and cold into my hand. I did not have to look at it to know that it was a heavy pistol. "Tyke 'er an' use 'er," was all he said.

Our bow was pointed straight toward the U-boat now as I heard word passed to the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

engine for full speed ahead. I instantly grasped the brazen effrontery of the plucky English skipper—he was going to ram five hundreds tons of U-boat in the face of her trained gun. I could scarce repress a cheer. At first the boches didn't seem to grasp his intention. Evidently they thought they were witnessing an exhibition of poor seamanship, and they yelled their warnings to the tug to reduce speed and throw the helm hard to port.

We were within fifty feet of them when they awakened to the intentional menace of our maneuver. Their gun crew was off its guard; but they sprang to their piece now and sent a futile shell above our heads. Nobs leaped about and barked furiously. "Let 'em have it!" commanded the tug-captain, and instantly revolvers and rifles poured bullets upon the deck of the submersible. Two of the gun-crew went down; the other trained their piece at the waterline of the oncoming tug. The balance of those on deck replied to our small-arms fire, directing their efforts toward the man at our wheel.

I hastily pushed the girl down the companionway leading to the engine-room, and then I raised my pistol and fired my first shot at a boche. What happened in the next few seconds happened so quickly that details are rather blurred in my memory. I saw the helmsman lunge forward upon the wheel, pulling the helm around so that the tug sheered off quickly from her course, and I recall realizing that all our efforts were to be in vain, because of all the men aboard, Fate had decreed that this one should fall first to an enemy bullet. I saw the depleted gun-crew on the submarine fire their piece and I felt the shock of impact and heard the loud explosion as the shell struck and exploded in our bows.

I saw and realized these things even as I was leaping into the pilot-house and grasping the wheel, standing astride the dead body of the helmsman. With all my strength I threw the helm to starboard; but it was too late to effect the purpose of our skipper. The best I did was to scrape alongside the sub. I heard someone shriek an order into the engine-room; the boat shuddered and trembled to the sudden reversing of the engines, and our speed quickly lessened. Then I saw what that madman of a skipper planned since his first scheme had gone wrong.

With a loud-yelled command, he leaped to the slippery deck of the submersible, and at his heels came his hardy crew. I sprang from the pilot-house and followed, not to be left out in the cold when it came to strafing the boches. From the engine room companionway came the engineer and stockers, and together we leaped after the balance of the crew and into the hand-to-hand fight that was covering the wet deck with red blood. Beside me came Nobs, silent now, and grim. Germans were emerging from the open hatch to take part in the battle on deck. At first the pistols cracked amidst the cursing of the men and the loud commands of the commander and his junior; but presently we were too indiscriminately mixed to make it safe to use our firearms, and the battle resolved itself into a hand-to-hand struggle for possession of the deck.

The sole aim of each of us was to hurl one of the opposing force into the sea. I shall never forget the hideous expression upon the face of the great Prussian with whom chance confronted me. He lowered his head and rushed at me, bellowing like a bull. With a quick sidestep and ducking low beneath his outstretched arms, I eluded him; and as he turned to come back at me, I landed a blow upon his chin which sent him spinning toward the edge of the deck. I saw his wild endeavors to regain his equilibrium; I saw him

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

reel drunkenly for an instant upon the brink of eternity and then, with a loud scream, slip into the sea. At the same instant a pair of giant arms encircled me from behind and lifted me entirely off my feet. Kick and squirm as I would, I could neither turn toward my antagonist nor free myself from his maniacal grasp. Relentlessly he was rushing me toward the side of the vessel and death. There was none to stay him, for each of my companions was more than occupied by from one to three of the enemy. For an instant I was fearful for myself, and then I saw that which filled me with a far greater terror for another.

My boche was bearing me toward the side of the submarine against which the tug was still pounding. That I should be ground to death between the two was lost upon me as I saw the girl standing alone upon the tug's deck, as I saw the stern high in air and the bow rapidly settling for the final dive, as I saw death from which I could not save her clutching at the skirts of the woman I now knew all too well that I loved.

I had perhaps the fraction of a second longer to live when I heard an angry growl behind us mingle with a cry of pain and rage from the giant who carried me. Instantly he went backward to the deck, and as he did so he threw his arms outwards to save himself, freeing me. I fell heavily upon him, but was upon my feet in the instant. As I arose, I cast a single glance at my opponent. Never again would he menace me or another, for Nob's great jaws had closed upon his throat. Then I sprang toward the edge of the deck closest to the girl upon the sinking tug.

"Jump!" I cried. "Jump!" And I held out my arms to her. Instantly as though with implicit confidence in my ability to save her, she leaped over the side of the tug onto the sloping, slippery side of the U-boat. I reached far over to seize her hand. At the same instant the tug pointed its stern straight toward the sky and plunged out of sight. My hand missed the girl's by a fraction of an inch, and I saw her slip into the sea; but scarce had she touched the water when I was in after her.

The sinking tug drew us far below the surface; but I had seized her the moment I struck the water, and so we went down together, and together we came up—a few yards from the U-boat. The first thing I heard was Nobs barking furiously; evidently he had missed me and was searching. A single glance at the vessel's deck assured me that the battle was over and that we had been victorious, for I saw our survivors holding a handful of the enemy at pistol points while one by one the rest of the crew was coming out of the craft's interior and lining up on deck with the other prisoners.

As I swam toward the submarine with the girl, Nobs' persistent barking attracted the attention of some of the tug's crew, so that as soon as we reached the side there were hands to help us aboard. I asked the girl if she was hurt, but she assured me that she was none the worse for this second wetting; nor did she seem to suffer any from shock. I was to learn for myself that this slender and seemingly delicate creature possessed the heart and courage of a warrior.

As we joined our own party, I found the tug's mate checking up our survivors. There were ten of us left, not including the girl. Our brave skipper was missing, as were eight others. There had been nineteen of us in the attacking party and we had accounted in one way and another during the battle for sixteen Germans and had taken nine prisoners, including the commander. His lieutenant had been killed.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Not a bad day's work," said Bradley, the mate, when he had completed his roll. "Only losing the skipper," he added, "was the worst. He was a fine man, a fine man."

Olson—who in spite of his name was Irish, and in spite of his not being Scotch had been the tug's engineer—was standing with Bradley and me. "Yis," he agreed, "it's a day's wor-rk we're after doin', but what are we goin' to be doin' wid it now we got it?"

"We'll run her into the nearest English port," said Bradley, "and then we'll all go ashore and get our V. C.'s," he concluded, laughing.

"How you goin' to run her?" queried Olson. "You can't trust these Dutchmen."

Bradley scratched his head. "I guess you're right," he admitted. "And I don't know the first thing about a sub."

"I do," I assured him. "I know more about this particular sub than the officer who commanded her."

Both men looked at me in astonishment, and then I had to explain all over again as I had explained to the girl. Bradley and Olson were delighted. Immediately I was put in command, and the first thing I did was to go below with Olson and inspect the craft thoroughly for hidden boches and damaged machinery. There were no Germans below, and everything was intact and in shipshape working order. I then ordered all hands below except one man who was to act as lookout. Questioning the Germans, I found that all except the commander were willing to resume their posts and aid in bringing the vessel into an English port. I believe that they were relieved at the prospect of being detained at a comfortable English prisoncamp for the duration of the war after the perils and privations through which they had passed. The officer, however, assured me that he would never be a party to the capture of his vessel.

There was, therefore, nothing to do but put the man in irons. As we were preparing to put this decision into force, the girl descended from the deck. It was the first time that she or the German officer had seen each other's faces since we had boarded the U-boat.

I was assisting the girl down the ladder and still retained a hold upon her arm—possibly after such support was no longer necessary—when she turned and looked squarely into the face of the German. Each voiced a sudden exclamation of surprise and dismay.

"Lys!" he cried, and took a step toward her.

The girl's eyes went wide, and slowly filled with a great horror, as she shrank back. Then her slender figure stiffened to the erectness of a soldier, and with chin in air and without a word she turned her back upon the officer.

"Take him away," I directed the two men who guarded him, "and put him in irons."

When he had gone, the girl raised her eyes to mine. "He is the German of whom I spoke," she said. "He is Baron von Schoenvorts."

I merely inclined my head. She had loved him! I wondered if in her heart of hearts she did not love him yet. Immediately I became insanely jealous. I hated Baron Friedrich von Schoenvorts with such utter intensity that the emotion thrilled me with a species of exaltation.

But I didn't have much chance to enjoy my hatred then, for almost immediately the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

lookout poked his face over the hatchway and bawled down that there was smoke on the horizon, dead ahead. Immediately I went on deck to investigate, and Bradley came with me.

"If she's friendly," he said, "we'll speak her. If she's not, we'll sink her—eh, captain?"

"Yes, lieutenant," I replied, and it was his turn to smile.

We hoisted the Union Jack and remained on deck, asking Bradley to go below and assign to each member of the crew his duty, placing one Englishman with a pistol beside each German.

"Half speed ahead," I commanded.

More rapidly now we closed the distance between ourselves and the stranger, until I could plainly see the red ensign of the British merchant marine. My heart swelled with pride at the thought that presently admiring British tars would be congratulating us upon our notable capture; and just about then the merchant steamer must have sighted us, for she veered suddenly toward the north, and a moment later dense volumes of smoke issued from her funnels. Then, steering a zigzag course, she fled from us as though we had been the bubonic plague. I altered the course of the submarine and set off in chase; but the steamer was faster than we, and soon left us hopelessly astern.

With a rueful smile, I directed that our original course be resumed, and once again we set off toward merry England. That was three months ago, and we haven't arrived yet; nor is there any likelihood that we ever shall. The steamer we had just sighted must have wirelessly a warning, for it wasn't half an hour before we saw more smoke on the horizon, and this time the vessel flew the white ensign of the Royal Navy and carried guns. She didn't veer to the north or anywhere else, but bore down on us rapidly. I was just preparing to signal her, when a flame flashed from her bows, and an instant later the water in front of us was thrown high by the explosion of a shell.

Bradley had come on deck and was standing beside me. "About one more of those, and she'll have our range," he said. "She doesn't seem to take much stock in our Union Jack."

A second shell passed over us, and then I gave the command to change our direction, at the same time directing Bradley to go below and give the order to submerge. I passed Nobs down to him, and following, saw to the closing and fastening of the hatch.

It seemed to me that the diving-tanks never had filled so slowly. We heard a loud explosion apparently directly above us; the craft trembled to the shock which threw us all to the deck. I expected momentarily to feel the deluge of intrushing water, but none came. Instead we continued to submerge until the manometer registered forty feet and then I knew that we were safe. Safe! I almost smiled. I had relieved Olson, who had remained in the tower at my direction, having been a member of one of the early British submarine crews, and therefore having some knowledge of the business. Bradley was at my side. He looked at me quizzically.

"What the devil are we to do?" he asked. "The merchantman will flee us; the war-vessel will destroy us; neither will believe our colors or give us a chance to explain. We will meet even a worse reception if we go nosing around a British port—mines, nets and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

all of it. We can't do it."

"Let's try it again when this fellow has lost the scent," I urged. "There must come a ship that will believe us."

And try it again we did, only to be almost rammed by a huge freighter. Later we were fired upon by a destroyer, and two merchantmen turned and fled at our approach. For two days we cruised up and down the Channel trying to tell some one, who would listen, that we were friends; but no one would listen. After our encounter with the first warship I had given instructions that a wireless message be sent out explaining our predicament; but to my chagrin I discovered that both sending and receiving instruments had disappeared.

"There is only one place you can go," von Schoenvorts sent word to me, "and that is Kiel. You can't land anywhere else in these waters. If you wish, I will take you there, and I can promise that you will be treated well."

"There is another place we can go," I sent back my reply, "and we will before we'll go to Germany. That place is hell."

Those were anxious days, during which I had but little opportunity to associate with Lys. I had given her the commander's room, Bradley and I taking that of the deck-officer, while Olson and two of our best men occupied the room ordinarily allotted to petty officers. I made Nobs' bed down in Lys' room, for I knew she would feel less alone.

Nothing of much moment occurred for a while after we left British waters behind us. We ran steadily along upon the surface, making good time. The first two boats we sighted made off as fast as they could go; and the third, a huge freighter, fired on us, forcing us to submerge. It was after this that our troubles commenced. One of the Diesel engines broke down in the morning, and while we were working on it, the forward port diving-tank commenced to fill. I was on deck at the time and noted the gradual list. Guessing at once what was happening, I leaped for the hatch and slamming it closed above my head, dropped to the centrale. By this time the craft was going down by the head with a most unpleasant list to port, and I didn't wait to transmit orders to some one else but ran as fast as I could for the valve that let the sea into the forward port diving-tank. It was wide open. To close it and to have the pump started that would empty it were the work of but a minute; but we had had a close call.

I knew that the valve had never opened itself. Some one had opened it—some one who was willing to die himself if he might at the same time encompass the death of all of us.

After that I kept a guard pacing the length of the narrow craft. We worked upon the engine all that day and night and half the following day. Most of the time we drifted idly upon the surface, but toward noon we sighted smoke due west, and having found that only enemies inhabited the world for us, I ordered that the other engine be started so that we could move out of the path of the oncoming steamer. The moment the engine started to turn, however, there was a grinding sound of tortured steel, and when it had been stopped, we found that some one had placed a cold-chisel in one of the gears.

It was another two days before we were ready to limp along, half repaired. The night before the repairs were completed, the sentry came to my room and awoke me. He was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

rather an intelligent fellow of the English middle class, in whom I had much confidence.

"Well, Wilson," I asked. "What's the matter now?"

He raised his finger to his lips and came closer to me. "I think I've found out who's doin' the mischief," he whispered, and nodded his head toward the girl's room. "I seen her sneakin' from the crew's room just now," he went on. "She'd been in gassin' wit' the boche commander. Benson seen her in there las' night, too, but he never said nothin' till I goes on watch tonight. Benson's sorter slow in the head, an' he never puts two an' two together till some one else has made four out of it."

If the man had come in and struck me suddenly in the face, I could have been no more surprised.

"Say nothing of this to anyone," I ordered. "Keep your eyes and ears open and report every suspicious thing you see or hear."

The man saluted and left me; but for an hour or more I tossed, restless, upon my hard bunk in an agony of jealousy and fear. Finally I fell into a troubled sleep. It was daylight when I awoke. We were steaming along slowly upon the surface, my orders having been to proceed at half speed until we could take an observation and determine our position. The sky had been overcast all the previous day and all night; but as I stepped into the centrale that morning I was delighted to see that the sun was again shining. The spirits of the men seemed improved; everything seemed propitious. I forgot at once the cruel misgivings of the past night as I set to work to take my observations.

What a blow awaited me! The sextant and chronometer had both been broken beyond repair, and they had been broken just this very night. They had been broken upon the night that Lys had been seen talking with von Schoenvorts. I think that it was this last thought which hurt me the worst. I could look the other disaster in the face with equanimity; but the bald fact that Lys might be a traitor appalled me.

I called Bradley and Olson on deck and told them what had happened, but for the life of me I couldn't bring myself to repeat what Wilson had reported to me the previous night. In fact, as I had given the matter thought, it seemed incredible that the girl could have passed through my room, in which Bradley and I slept, and then carried on a conversation in the crew's room, in which Von Schoenvorts was kept, without having been seen by more than a single man.

Bradley shook his head. "I can't make it out," he said. "One of those boches must be pretty clever to come it over us all like this; but they haven't harmed us as much as they think; there are still the extra instruments."

It was my turn now to shake a doleful head. "There are no extra instruments," I told them. "They too have disappeared as did the wireless apparatus."

Both men looked at me in amazement. "We still have the compass and the sun," said Olson. "They may be after getting the compass some night; but they's too many of us around in the daytime fer 'em to get the sun."

It was then that one of the men stuck his head up through the hatchway and seeing me, asked permission to come on deck and get a breath of fresh air. I recognized him as Benson, the man who, Wilson had said, reported having seen Lys with von Schoenvorts two nights before. I motioned him on deck and then called him to one side, asking if he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

had seen anything out of the way or unusual during his trick on watch the night before. The fellow scratched his head a moment and said, "No," and then as though it was an afterthought, he told me that he had seen the girl in the crew's room about midnight talking with the German commander, but as there hadn't seemed to him to be any harm in that, he hadn't said anything about it. Telling him never to fail to report to me anything in the slightest out of the ordinary routine of the ship, I dismissed him.

Several of the other men now asked permission to come on deck, and soon all but those actually engaged in some necessary duty were standing around smoking and talking, all in the best of spirits. I took advantage of the absence of the men upon the deck to go below for my breakfast, which the cook was already preparing upon the electric stove. Lys, followed by Nobs, appeared as I entered the centrale. She met me with a pleasant "Good morning!" which I am afraid I replied to in a tone that was rather constrained and surly.

"Will you breakfast with me?" I suddenly asked the girl, determined to commence a probe of my own along the lines which duty demanded.

She nodded a sweet acceptance of my invitation, and together we sat down at the little table of the officers' mess. "You slept well last night?" I asked.

"All night," she replied. "I am a splendid sleeper."

Her manner was so straightforward and honest that I could not bring myself to believe in her duplicity; yet—Thinking to surprise her into a betrayal of her guilt, I blurted out: "The chronometer and sextant were both destroyed last night; there is a traitor among us." But she never turned a hair by way of evidencing guilty knowledge of the catastrophe.

"Who could it have been?" she cried. "The Germans would be crazy to do it, for their lives are as much at stake as ours."

"Men are often glad to die for an ideal—an ideal of patriotism, perhaps," I replied; "and a willingness to martyr themselves includes a willingness to sacrifice others, even those who love them. Women are much the same, except that they will go even further than most men—they will sacrifice everything, even honor, for love."

I watched her face carefully as I spoke, and I thought that I detected a very faint flush mounting her cheek. Seeing an opening and an advantage, I sought to follow it up.

"Take von Schoenvorts, for instance," I continued: "he would doubtless be glad to die and take us all with him, could he prevent in no other way the falling of his vessel into enemy hands. He would sacrifice anyone, even you; and if you still love him, you might be his ready tool. Do you understand me?"

She looked at me in wide-eyed consternation for a moment, and then she went very white and rose from her seat. "I do," she replied, and turning her back upon me, she walked quickly toward her room. I started to follow, for even believing what I did, I was sorry that I had hurt her. I reached the door to the crew's room just behind her and in time to see von Schoenvorts lean forward and whisper something to her as she passed; but she must have guessed that she might be watched, for she passed on.

That afternoon it clouded over; the wind mounted to a gale, and the sea rose until the craft was wallowing and rolling frightfully. Nearly everyone aboard was sick; the air

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

became foul and oppressive. For twenty-four hours I did not leave my post in the conning tower, as both Olson and Bradley were sick. Finally I found that I must get a little rest, and so I looked about for some one to relieve me. Benson volunteered. He had not been sick, and assured me that he was a former R.N. man and had been detailed for submarine duty for over two years. I was glad that it was he, for I had considerable confidence in his loyalty, and so it was with a feeling of security that I went below and lay down.

I slept twelve hours straight, and when I awoke and discovered what I had done, I lost no time in getting to the conning tower. There sat Benson as wide awake as could be, and the compass showed that we were heading straight into the west. The storm was still raging; nor did it abate its fury until the fourth day. We were all pretty well done up and looked forward to the time when we could go on deck and fill our lungs with fresh air. During the whole four days I had not seen the girl, as she evidently kept closely to her room; and during this time no untoward incident had occurred aboard the boat—a fact which seemed to strengthen the web of circumstantial evidence about her.

For six more days after the storm lessened we still had fairly rough weather; nor did the sun once show himself during all that time. For the season—it was now the middle of June—the storm was unusual; but being from southern California, I was accustomed to unusual weather. In fact, I have discovered that the world over, unusual weather prevails at all times of the year.

We kept steadily to our westward course, and as the U-33 was one of the fastest submersibles we had ever turned out, I knew that we must be pretty close to the North American coast. What puzzled me most was the fact that for six days we had not sighted a single ship. It seemed remarkable that we could cross the Atlantic almost to the coast of the American continent without glimpsing smoke or sail, and at last I came to the conclusion that we were way off our course, but whether to the north or to the south of it I could not determine.

On the seventh day the sea lay comparatively calm at early dawn. There was a slight haze upon the ocean which had cut off our view of the stars; but conditions all pointed toward a clear morrow, and I was on deck anxiously awaiting the rising of the sun. My eyes were glued upon the impenetrable mist astern, for there in the east I should see the first glow of the rising sun that would assure me we were still upon the right course. Gradually the heavens lightened; but astern I could see no intenser glow that would indicate the rising sun behind the mist. Bradley was standing at my side. Presently he touched my arm.

“Look, captain,” he said, and pointed south.

I looked and gasped, for there directly to port I saw outlined through the haze the red top of the rising sun. Hurrying to the tower, I looked at the compass. It showed that we were holding steadily upon our westward course. Either the sun was rising in the south, or the compass had been tampered with. The conclusion was obvious.

I went back to Bradley and told him what I had discovered. “And,” I concluded, “we can’t make another five hundred knots without oil; our provisions are running low and so is our water. God only knows how far south we have run.”

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"There is nothing to do," he replied, "other than to alter our course once more toward the west; we must raise land soon or we shall all be lost."

I told him to do so; and then I set to work improvising a crude sextant with which we finally took our bearings in a rough and most unsatisfactory manner; for when the work was done, we did not know how far from the truth the result might be. It showed us to be about 20' north and 30' west—nearly twenty-five hundred miles off our course. In short, if our reading was anywhere near correct, we must have been traveling due south for six days. Bradley now relieved Benson, for we had arranged our shifts so that the latter and Olson now divided the nights, while Bradley and I alternated with one another during the days.

I questioned both Olson and Benson closely in the matter of the compass; but each stoutly maintained that no one had tampered with it during his tour of duty. Benson gave me a knowing smile, as much as to say: "Well, you and I know who did this." Yet I could not believe that it was the girl.

We kept to our westerly course for several hours when the lookout's cry announced a sail. I ordered the U-33's course altered, and we bore down upon the stranger, for I had come to a decision which was the result of necessity. We could not lie there in the middle of the Atlantic and starve to death if there was any way out of it. The sailing ship saw us while we were still a long way off, as was evidenced by her efforts to escape. There was scarcely any wind, however, and her case was hopeless; so when we drew near and signaled her to stop, she came into the wind and lay there with her sails flapping idly. We moved in quite close to her. She was the Balmen of Halmstad, Sweden, with a general cargo from Brazil for Spain.

I explained our circumstances to her skipper and asked for food, water and oil; but when he found that we were not German, he became very angry and abusive and started to draw away from us; but I was in no mood for any such business. Turning toward Bradley, who was in the conning-tower, I snapped out: "Gun-service on deck! To the diving stations!" We had no opportunity for drill; but every man had been posted as to his duties, and the German members of the crew understood that it was obedience or death for them, as each was accompanied by a man with a pistol. Most of them, though, were only too glad to obey me.

Bradley passed the order down into the ship and a moment later the gun-crew clambered up the narrow ladder and at my direction trained their piece upon the slow-moving Swede. "Fire a shot across her bow," I instructed the gun-captain.

Accept it from me, it didn't take that Swede long to see the error of his way and get the red and white pennant signifying "I understand" to the masthead. Once again the sails flapped idly, and then I ordered him to lower a boat and come after me. With Olson and a couple of the Englishmen I boarded the ship, and from her cargo selected what we needed—oil, provisions and water. I gave the master of the Balmen a receipt for what we took, together with an affidavit signed by Bradley, Olson, and myself, stating briefly how we had come into possession of the U-33 and the urgency of our need for what we took. We addressed both to any British agent with the request that the owners of the Balmen be reimbursed; but whether or not they were, I do not know. [1]

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

[1] Late in July, 1916, an item in the shipping news mentioned a Swedish sailing vessel, Balmen, Rio de Janiero to Barcelona, sunk by a German raider sometime in June. A single survivor in an open boat was picked up off the Cape Verde Islands, in a dying condition. He expired without giving any details.

With water, food, and oil aboard, we felt that we had obtained a new lease of life. Now, too, we knew definitely where we were, and I determined to make for Georgetown, British Guiana—but I was destined to again suffer bitter disappointment.

Six of us of the loyal crew had come on deck either to serve the gun or board the Swede during our set-to with her; and now, one by one, we descended the ladder into the centrale. I was the last to come, and when I reached the bottom, I found myself looking into the muzzle of a pistol in the hands of Baron Friedrich von Schoenvorts—I saw all my men lined up at one side with the remaining eight Germans standing guard over them.

I couldn't imagine how it had happened; but it had. Later I learned that they had first overpowered Benson, who was asleep in his bunk, and taken his pistol from him, and then had found it an easy matter to disarm the cook and the remaining two Englishmen below. After that it had been comparatively simple to stand at the foot of the ladder and arrest each individual as he descended.

The first thing von Schoenvorts did was to send for me and announce that as a pirate I was to be shot early the next morning. Then he explained that the U-33 would cruise in these waters for a time, sinking neutral and enemy shipping indiscriminately, and looking for one of the German raiders that was supposed to be in these parts.

He didn't shoot me the next morning as he had promised, and it has never been clear to me why he postponed the execution of my sentence. Instead he kept me ironed just as he had been; then he kicked Bradley out of my room and took it all to himself.

We cruised for a long time, sinking many vessels, all but one by gunfire, but we did not come across a German raider. I was surprised to note that von Schoenvorts often permitted Benson to take command; but I reconciled this by the fact that Benson appeared to know more of the duties of a submarine commander than did any of the Stupid Germans.

Once or twice Lys passed me; but for the most part she kept to her room. The first time she hesitated as though she wished to speak to me; but I did not raise my head, and finally she passed on. Then one day came the word that we were about to round the Horn and that von Schoenvorts had taken it into his fool head to cruise up along the Pacific coast of North America and prey upon all sorts and conditions of merchantmen.

"I'll put the fear of God and the Kaiser into them," he said.

The very first day we entered the South Pacific we had an adventure. It turned out to be quite the most exciting adventure I had ever encountered. It fell about this way. About eight bells of the forenoon watch I heard a hail from the deck, and presently the footsteps of the entire ship's company, from the amount of noise I heard at the ladder. Some one yelled back to those who had not yet reached the level of the deck: "It's the raider, the German raider Geier!"

I saw that we had reached the end of our rope. Below all was quiet—not a man re-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

mained. A door opened at the end of the narrow hull, and presently Nobs came trotting up to me. He licked my face and rolled over on his back, reaching for me with his big, awkward paws. Then other footsteps sounded, approaching me. I knew whose they were, and I looked straight down at the flooring. The girl was coming almost at a run—she was at my side immediately. “Here!” she cried. “Quick!” And she slipped something into my hand. It was a key—the key to my irons. At my side she also laid a pistol, and then she went on into the centrale. As she passed me, I saw that she carried another pistol for herself. It did not take me long to liberate myself, and then I was at her side. “How can I thank you?” I started; but she shut me up with a word.

“Do not thank me,” she said coldly. “I do not care to hear your thanks or any other expression from you. Do not stand there looking at me. I have given you a chance to do something—now do it!” The last was a peremptory command that made me jump.

Glancing up, I saw that the tower was empty, and I lost no time in clambering up, looking about me. About a hundred yards off lay a small, swift cruiser-raider, and above her floated the German man-of-war’s flag. A boat had just been lowered, and I could see it moving toward us filled with officers and men. The cruiser lay dead ahead. “My,” I thought, “what a wonderful targ—” I stopped even thinking, so surprised and shocked was I by the boldness of my imagery. The girl was just below me. I looked down on her wistfully. Could I trust her? Why had she released me at this moment? I must! I must! There was no other way. I dropped back below. “Ask Olson to step down here, please,” I requested; “and don’t let anyone see you ask him.”

She looked at me with a puzzled expression on her face for the barest fraction of a second, and then she turned and went up the ladder. A moment later Olson returned, and the girl followed him. “Quick!” I whispered to the big Irishman, and made for the bow compartment where the torpedo-tubes are built into the boat; here, too, were the torpedoes. The girl accompanied us, and when she saw the thing I had in mind, she stepped forward and lent a hand to the swinging of the great cylinder of death and destruction into the mouth of its tube. With oil and main strength we shoved the torpedo home and shut the tube; then I ran back to the conning-tower, praying in my heart of hearts that the U-33 had not swung her bow away from the prey. No, thank God!

Never could aim have been truer. I signaled back to Olson: “Let ‘er go!” The U-33 trembled from stem to stern as the torpedo shot from its tube. I saw the white wake leap from her bow straight toward the enemy cruiser. A chorus of hoarse yells arose from the deck of our own craft: I saw the officers stand suddenly erect in the boat that was approaching us, and I heard loud cries and curses from the raider. Then I turned my attention to my own business. Most of the men on the submarine’s deck were standing in paralyzed fascination, staring at the torpedo. Bradley happened to be looking toward the conning-tower and saw me. I sprang on deck and ran toward him. “Quick!” I whispered. “While they are stunned, we must overcome them.”

A German was standing near Bradley—just in front of him. The Englishman struck the fellow a frantic blow upon the neck and at the same time snatched his pistol from its holster. Von Schoenvorts had recovered from his first surprise quickly and had turned toward the main hatch to investigate. I covered him with my revolver, and at the same instant the torpedo struck the raider, the terrific explosion drowning the German’s com-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

mand to his men.

Bradley was now running from one to another of our men, and though some of the Germans saw and heard him, they seemed too stunned for action.

Olson was below, so that there were only nine of us against eight Germans, for the man Bradley had struck still lay upon the deck. Only two of us were armed; but the heart seemed to have gone out of the boches, and they put up but half-hearted resistance. Von Schoenvorts was the worst—he was fairly frenzied with rage and chagrin, and he came charging for me like a mad bull, and as he came he discharged his pistol. If he'd stopped long enough to take aim, he might have gotten me; but his pace made him wild, so that not a shot touched me, and then we clinched and went to the deck. This left two pistols, which two of my own men were quick to appropriate. The Baron was no match for me in a hand-to-hand encounter, and I soon had him pinned to the deck and the life almost choked out of him.

A half-hour later things had quieted down, and all was much the same as before the prisoners had revolted—only we kept a much closer watch on von Schoenvorts. The Geier had sunk while we were still battling upon our deck, and afterward we had drawn away toward the north, leaving the survivors to the attention of the single boat which had been making its way toward us when Olson launched the torpedo. I suppose the poor devils never reached land, and if they did, they most probably perished on that cold and unhospitable shore; but I couldn't permit them aboard the U-33. We had all the Germans we could take care of.

That evening the girl asked permission to go on deck. She said that she felt the effects of long confinement below, and I readily granted her request. I could not understand her, and I craved an opportunity to talk with her again in an effort to fathom her and her intentions, and so I made it a point to follow her up the ladder. It was a clear, cold, beautiful night. The sea was calm except for the white water at our bows and the two long radiating swells running far off into the distance upon either hand astern, forming a great V which our propellers filled with choppy waves. Benson was in the tower, we were bound for San Diego and all looked well.

Lys stood with a heavy blanket wrapped around her slender figure, and as I approached her, she half turned toward me to see who it was. When she recognized me, she immediately turned away.

"I want to thank you," I said, "for your bravery and loyalty—you were magnificent. I am sorry that you had reason before to think that I doubted you."

"You did doubt me," she replied in a level voice. "You practically accused me of aiding Baron von Schoenvorts. I can never forgive you."

There was a great deal of finality in both her words and tone.

"I could not believe it," I said; "and yet two of my men reported having seen you in conversation with von Schoenvorts late at night upon two separate occasions—after each of which some great damage was found done us in the morning. I didn't want to doubt you; but I carried all the responsibility of the lives of these men, of the safety of the ship, of your life and mine. I had to watch you, and I had to put you on your guard against a repetition of your madness."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

She was looking at me now with those great eyes of hers, very wide and round.

“Who told you that I spoke with Baron von Schoenvorts at night, or any other time?” she asked.

“I cannot tell you, Lys,” I replied, “but it came to me from two different sources.”

“Then two men have lied,” she asserted without heat. “I have not spoken to Baron von Schoenvorts other than in your presence when first we came aboard the U-33. And please, when you address me, remember that to others than my intimates I am Miss La Rue.”

Did you ever get slapped in the face when you least expected it? No? Well, then you do not know how I felt at that moment. I could feel the hot, red flush surging up my neck, across my cheeks, over my ears, clear to my scalp. And it made me love her all the more; it made me swear inwardly a thousand solemn oaths that I would win her.

For several days things went along in about the same course. I took our position every morning with my crude sextant; but the results were always most unsatisfactory. They always showed a considerable westing when I knew that we had been sailing due north. I blamed my crude instrument, and kept on. Then one afternoon the girl came to me.

“Pardon me,” she said, “but were I you, I should watch this man Benson—especially when he is in charge.” I asked her what she meant, thinking I could see the influence of von Schoenvorts raising a suspicion against one of my most trusted men.

“If you will note the boat’s course a half-hour after Benson goes on duty,” she said, “you will know what I mean, and you will understand why he prefers a night watch. Possibly, too, you will understand some other things that have taken place aboard.”

Then she went back to her room, thus ending the conversation. I waited until half an hour after Benson had gone on duty, and then I went on deck, passing through the conning-tower where Benson sat, and looking at the compass. It showed that our course was north by west—that is, one point west of north, which was, for our assumed position, about right. I was greatly relieved to find that nothing was wrong, for the girl’s words had caused me considerable apprehension. I was about to return to my room when a thought occurred to me that again caused me to change my mind—and, incidentally, came near proving my death-warrant.

When I had left the conning-tower little more than a half-hour since, the sea had been breaking over the port bow, and it seemed to me quite improbable that in so short a time an equally heavy sea could be deluging us from the opposite side of the ship—winds may change quickly, but not a long, heavy sea. There was only one other solution—since I left the tower, our course had been altered some eight points. Turning quickly, I climbed out upon the conning-tower. A single glance at the heavens confirmed my suspicions; the constellations which should have been dead ahead were directly starboard. We were sailing due west.

Just for an instant longer I stood there to check up my calculations—I wanted to be quite sure before I accused Benson of perfidy, and about the only thing I came near making quite sure of was death. I cannot see even now how I escaped it. I was standing on the edge of the conning-tower, when a heavy palm suddenly struck me between the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

shoulders and hurled me forward into space. The drop to the triangular deck forward of the conning-tower might easily have broken a leg for me, or I might have slipped off onto the deck and rolled overboard; but fate was upon my side, as I was only slightly bruised. As I came to my feet, I heard the conning-tower cover slam. There is a ladder which leads from the deck to the top of the tower. Up this I scrambled, as fast as I could go; but Benson had the cover tight before I reached it.

I stood there a moment in dumb consternation.

What did the fellow intend? What was going on below? If Benson was a traitor, how could I know that there were not other traitors among us? I cursed myself for my folly in going out upon the deck, and then this thought suggested another—a hideous one: who was it that had really been responsible for my being here?

Thinking to attract attention from inside the craft, I again ran down the ladder and onto the small deck only to find that the steel covers of the conning-tower windows were shut, and then I leaned with my back against the tower and cursed myself for a gullible idiot.

I glanced at the bow. The sea seemed to be getting heavier, for every wave now washed completely over the lower deck. I watched them for a moment, and then a sudden chill pervaded my entire being. It was not the chill of wet clothing, or the dashing spray which drenched my face; no, it was the chill of the hand of death upon my heart. In an instant I had turned the last corner of life's highway and was looking God Almighty in the face—the U-33 was being slowly submerged!

It would be difficult, even impossible, to set down in writing my sensations at that moment. All I can particularly recall is that I laughed, though neither from a spirit of bravado nor from hysteria. And I wanted to smoke. Lord! how I did want to smoke; but that was out of the question.

I watched the water rise until the little deck I stood on was awash, and then I clambered once more to the top of the conning-tower. From the very slow submergence of the boat I knew that Benson was doing the entire trick alone—that he was merely permitting the diving-tanks to fill and that the diving-rudders were not in use. The throbbing of the engines ceased, and in its stead came the steady vibration of the electric motors. The water was halfway up the conning-tower! I had perhaps five minutes longer on the deck. I tried to decide what I should do after I was washed away. Should I swim until exhaustion claimed me, or should I give up and end the agony at the first plunge?

From below came two muffled reports. They sounded not unlike shots. Was Benson meeting with resistance? Personally it could mean little to me, for even though my men might overcome the enemy, none would know of my predicament until long after it was too late to succor me. The top of the conning-tower was now awash. I clung to the wireless mast, while the great waves surged sometimes completely over me.

I knew the end was near and, almost involuntarily, I did that which I had not done since childhood—I prayed. After that I felt better.

I clung and waited, but the water rose no higher.

Instead it receded. Now the top of the conning-tower received only the crests of the higher waves; now the little triangular deck below became visible! What had occurred

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

within? Did Benson believe me already gone, and was he emerging because of that belief, or had he and his forces been vanquished? The suspense was more wearing than that which I had endured while waiting for dissolution. Presently the main deck came into view, and then the conningtower opened behind me, and I turned to look into the anxious face of Bradley. An expression of relief overspread his features.

"Thank God, man!" was all he said as he reached forth and dragged me into the tower. was cold and numb and rather all in. Another few minutes would have done for me, I am sure, but the warmth of the interior helped to revive me, aided and abetted by some brandy which Bradley poured down my throat, from which it nearly removed the membrane. That brandy would have revived a corpse.

When I got down into the centrale, I saw the Germans lined up on one side with a couple of my men with pistols standing over them. Von Schoenvorts was among them. On the floor lay Benson, moaning, and beyond him stood the girl, a revolver in one hand. I looked about, bewildered.

"What has happened down here?" I asked. "Tell me!"

Bradley replied. "You see the result, sir," he said. "It might have been a very different result but for Miss La Rue. We were all asleep. Benson had relieved the guard early in the evening; there was no one to watch him—no one but Miss La Rue. She felt the submergence of the boat and came out of her room to investigate. She was just in time to see Benson at the diving rudders. When he saw her, he raised his pistol and fired point-blank at her, but he missed and she fired—and didn't miss. The two shots awakened everyone, and as our men were armed, the result was inevitable as you see it; but it would have been very different had it not been for Miss La Rue. It was she who closed the diving-tank sea-cocks and roused Olson and me, and had the pumps started to empty them."

And there I had been thinking that through her machinations I had been lured to the deck and to my death! I could have gone on my knees to her and begged her forgiveness—or at least I could have, had I not been Anglo-Saxon. As it was, I could only remove my soggy cap and bow and mumble my appreciation. She made no reply—only turned and walked very rapidly toward her room. Could I have heard aright? Was it really a sob that came floating back to me through the narrow aisle of the U-33?

Benson died that night. He remained defiant almost to the last; but just before he went out, he motioned to me, and I leaned over to catch the faintly whispered words.

"I did it alone," he said. "I did it because I hate you—I hate all your kind. I was kicked out of your shipyard at Santa Monica. I was locked out of California. I am an I. W. W. I became a German agent— not because I love them, for I hate them too—but because I wanted to injure Americans, whom I hated more. I threw the wireless apparatus overboard. I destroyed the chronometer and the sextant. I devised a scheme for varying the compass to suit my wishes. I told Wilson that I had seen the girl talking with von Schoenvorts, and I made the poor egg think he had seen her doing the same thing. I am sorry—sorry that my plans failed. I hate you."

He didn't die for a half-hour after that; nor did he speak again—aloud; but just a few seconds before he went to meet his Maker, his lips moved in a faint whisper; and as I

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

leaned closer to catch his words, what do you suppose I heard? "Now—I— lay me—down—to—sleep" That was all; Benson was dead. We threw his body overboard.

The wind of that night brought on some pretty rough weather with a lot of black clouds which persisted for several days. We didn't know what course we had been holding, and there was no way of finding out, as we could no longer trust the compass, not knowing what Benson had done to it. The long and the short of it was that we cruised about aimlessly until the sun came out again. I'll never forget that day or its surprises. We reckoned, or rather guessed, that we were somewhere off the coast of Peru. The wind, which had been blowing fitfully from the east, suddenly veered around into the south, and presently we felt a sudden chill.

"Peru!" snorted Olson. "When were yez after smellin' iceber-rgs off Peru?"

Icebergs! "Icebergs, nothin'!" exclaimed one of the Englishmen. "Why, man, they don't come north of fourteen here in these waters."

"Then," replied Olson, "ye're sout' of fourteen, me b'y."

We thought he was crazy; but he wasn't, for that afternoon we sighted a great berg south of us, and we'd been running north, we thought, for days. I can tell you we were a discouraged lot; but we got a faint thrill of hope early the next morning when the lookout bawled down the open hatch: "Land! Land northwest by west!"

I think we were all sick for the sight of land. I know that I was; but my interest was quickly dissipated by the sudden illness of three of the Germans. Almost simultaneously they commenced vomiting. They couldn't suggest any explanation for it. I asked them what they had eaten, and found they had eaten nothing other than the food cooked for all of us. "Have you drunk anything?" I asked, for I knew that there was liquor aboard, and medicines in the same locker.

"Only water," moaned one of them. "We all drank water together this morning. We opened a new tank. Maybe it was the water."

I started an investigation which revealed a terrifying condition—some one, probably Benson, had poisoned all the running water on the ship. It would have been worse, though, had land not been in sight. The sight of land filled us with renewed hope.

Our course had been altered, and we were rapidly approaching what appeared to be a precipitous headland. Cliffs, seemingly rising perpendicularly out of the sea, faded away into the mist upon either hand as we approached. The land before us might have been a continent, so mighty appeared the shoreline; yet we knew that we must be thousands of miles from the nearest western landmass—New Zealand or Australia.

We took our bearings with our crude and inaccurate instruments; we searched the chart; we cudgeled our brains; and at last it was Bradley who suggested a solution. He was in the tower and watching the compass, to which he called my attention. The needle was pointing straight toward the land. Bradley swung the helm hard to starboard. I could feel the U-33 respond, and yet the arrow still clung straight and sure toward the distant cliffs.

"What do you make of it?" I asked him.

"Did you ever hear of Caproni?" he asked.

"An early Italian navigator?" I returned.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Yes; he followed Cook about 1721. He is scarcely mentioned even by contemporaneous historians—probably because he got into political difficulties on his return to Italy. It was the fashion to scoff at his claims, but I recall reading one of his works—his only one, I believe—in which he described a new continent in the south seas, a continent made up of 'some strange metal' which attracted the compass; a rockbound, inhospitable coast, without beach or harbor, which extended for hundreds of miles. He could make no landing; nor in the several days he cruised about it did he see sign of life. He called it Caprona and sailed away. I believe, sir, that we are looking upon the coast of Caprona, uncharted and forgotten for two hundred years."

"If you are right, it might account for much of the deviation of the compass during the past two days," I suggested. "Caprona has been luring us upon her deadly rocks. Well, we'll accept her challenge. We'll land upon Caprona. Along that long front there must be a vulnerable spot. We will find it, Bradley, for we must find it. We must find water on Caprona, or we must die."

And so we approached the coast upon which no living eyes had ever rested. Straight from the ocean's depths rose towering cliffs, shot with brown and blues and greens—withered moss and lichen and the verdigris of copper, and everywhere the rusty ocher of iron pyrites. The cliff-tops, though ragged, were of such uniform height as to suggest the boundaries of a great plateau, and now and again we caught glimpses of verdure topping the rocky escarpment, as though bush or jungle-land had pushed outward from a lush vegetation farther inland to signal to an unseeing world that Caprona lived and joyed in life beyond her austere and repellent coast.

But metaphor, however poetic, never slaked a dry throat. To enjoy Caprona's romantic suggestions we must have water, and so we came in close, always sounding, and skirted the shore. As close in as we dared cruise, we found fathomless depths, and always the same undented coastline of bald cliffs. As darkness threatened, we drew away and lay well off the coast all night. We had not as yet really commenced to suffer for lack of water; but I knew that it would not be long before we did, and so at the first streak of dawn I moved in again and once more took up the hopeless survey of the forbidding coast.

Toward noon we discovered a beach, the first we had seen. It was a narrow strip of sand at the base of a part of the cliff that seemed lower than any we had before scanned. At its foot, half buried in the sand, lay great boulders, mute evidence that in a bygone age some mighty natural force had crumpled Caprona's barrier at this point. It was Bradley who first called our attention to a strange object lying among the boulders above the surf.

"Looks like a man," he said, and passed his glasses to me.

I looked long and carefully and could have sworn that the thing I saw was the sprawled figure of a human being. Miss La Rue was on deck with us. I turned and asked her to go below. Without a word she did as I bade. Then I stripped, and as I did so, Nobs looked questioningly at me. He had been wont at home to enter the surf with me, and evidently he had not forgotten it.

"What are you going to do, sir?" asked Olson.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I'm going to see what that thing is on shore," I replied. "If it's a man, it may mean that Caprona is inhabited, or it may merely mean that some poor devils were shipwrecked here. I ought to be able to tell from the clothing which is more near the truth.

"How about sharks?" queried Olson. "Sure, you ought to carry a knife."

"Here you are, sir," cried one of the men.

It was a long slim blade he offered—one that I could carry between my teeth—and so I accepted it gladly.

"Keep close in," I directed Bradley, and then I dived over the side and struck out for the narrow beach. There was another splash directly behind me, and turning my head, I saw faithful old Nobs swimming valiantly in my wake.

The surf was not heavy, and there was no undertow, so we made shore easily, effecting an equally easy landing. The beach was composed largely of small stones worn smooth by the action of water. There was little sand, though from the deck of the U33 the beach had appeared to be all sand, and I saw no evidences of mollusca or crustacea such as are common to all beaches I have previously seen. I attribute this to the fact of the smallness of the beach, the enormous depth of surrounding water and the great distance at which Caprona lies from her nearest neighbor.

As Nobs and I approached the recumbent figure farther up the beach, I was appraised by my nose that whether or not, the thing had once been organic and alive, but that for some time it had been dead. Nobs halted, sniffed and growled. A little later he sat down upon his haunches, raised his muzzle to the heavens and bayed forth a most dismal howl. I shied a small stone at him and bade him shut up—his uncanny noise made me nervous.

When I had come quite close to the thing, I still could not say whether it had been man or beast. The carcass was badly swollen and partly decomposed. There was no sign of clothing upon or about it. A fine, brownish hair covered the chest and abdomen, and the face, the palms of the hands, the feet, the shoulders and back were practically hairless. The creature must have been about the height of a fair sized man; its features were similar to those of a man; yet had it been a man?

I could not say, for it resembled an ape no more than it did a man. Its large toes protruded laterally as do those of the semiarboreal peoples of Borneo, the Philippines and other remote regions where low types still persist. The countenance might have been that of a cross between Pithecanthropus, the Java apeman, and a daughter of the Piltdown race of prehistoric Sussex. A wooden cudgel lay beside the corpse.

Now this fact set me thinking. There was no wood of any description in sight. There was nothing about the beach to suggest a wrecked mariner. There was absolutely nothing about the body to suggest that it might possibly in life have known a maritime experience. It was the body of a low type of man or a high type of beast. In neither instance would it have been of a seafaring race. Therefore I deduced that it was native to Caprona—that it lived inland, and that it had fallen or been hurled from the cliffs above. Such being the case, Caprona was inhabitable, if not inhabited, by man; but how to reach the inhabitable interior! That was the question. A closer view of the cliffs than had been afforded me from the deck of the U-33 only confirmed my conviction that no mortal man could scale those perpendicular heights; there was not a finger-hold, not a toe-hold, upon them.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I turned away baffled.

Nobs and I met with no sharks upon our return journey to the submarine. My report filled everyone with theories and speculations, and with renewed hope and determination. They all reasoned along the same lines that I had reasoned—the conclusions were obvious, but not the water. We were now thirstier than ever.

The balance of that day we spent in continuing a minute and fruitless exploration of the monotonous coast. There was not another break in the frowning cliffs—not even another minute patch of pebbly beach. As the sun fell, so did our spirits. I had tried to make advances to the girl again; but she would have none of me, and so I was not only thirsty but otherwise sad and downhearted. I was glad when the new day broke the hideous spell of a sleepless night.

The morning's search brought us no shred of hope. Caprona was impregnable—that was the decision of all; yet we kept on. It must have been about two bells of the afternoon watch that Bradley called my attention to the branch of a tree, with leaves upon it, floating on the sea. "It may have been carried down to the ocean by a river," he suggested. "Yes," I replied, "it may have; it may have tumbled or been thrown off the top of one of these cliffs."

Bradley's face fell. "I thought of that, too," he replied, "but I wanted to believe the other."

"Right you are!" I cried. "We must believe the other until we prove it false. We can't afford to give up heart now, when we need heart most. The branch was carried down by a river, and we are going to find that river." I smote my open palm with a clenched fist, to emphasize a determination unsupported by hope.

"There!" I cried suddenly. "See that, Bradley?" And I pointed at a spot closer to shore. "See that, man!" Some flowers and grasses and another leafy branch floated toward us. We both scanned the water and the coastline. Bradley evidently discovered something, or at least thought that he had. He called down for a bucket and a rope, and when they were passed up to him, he lowered the former into the sea and drew it in filled with water. Of this he took a taste, and straightening up, looked into my eyes with an expression of elation—as much as to say "I told you so!"

"This water is warm," he announced, "and fresh!"

I grabbed the bucket and tasted its contents. The water was very warm, and it was fresh, but there was a most unpleasant taste to it.

"Did you ever taste water from a stagnant pool full of tadpoles?" Bradley asked.

"That's it," I exclaimed, "—that's just the taste exactly, though I haven't experienced it since boyhood; but how can water from a flowing stream, taste thus, and what the dickens makes it so warm?"

It must be at least 70 or 80 Fahrenheit, possibly higher."

"Yes," agreed Bradley, "I should say higher; but where does it come from?"

"That is easily discovered now that we have found it," I answered. "It can't come from the ocean; so it must come from the land. All that we have to do is follow it, and sooner or later we shall come upon its source."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

We were already rather close in; but I ordered the U-33's prow turned inshore and we crept slowly along, constantly dipping up the water and tasting it to assure ourselves that we didn't get outside the fresh-water current. There was a very light offshore wind and scarcely any breakers, so that the approach to the shore was continued without finding bottom; yet though we were already quite close, we saw no indication of any indentation in the coast from which even a tiny brooklet might issue, and certainly no mouth of a large river such as this must necessarily be to freshen the ocean even two hundred yards from shore. The tide was running out, and this, together with the strong flow of the fresh-water current, would have prevented our going against the cliffs even had we not been under power; as it was we had to buck the combined forces in order to hold our position at all. We came up to within twenty-five feet of the sheer wall, which loomed high above us. There was no break in its forbidding face. As we watched the face of the waters and searched the cliff's high face, Olson suggested that the fresh water might come from a submarine geyser. This, he said, would account for its heat; but even as he spoke a bush, covered thickly with leaves and flowers, bubbled to the surface and floated off astern.

"Flowering shrubs don't thrive in the subterranean caverns from which geysers spring," suggested Bradley.

Olson shook his head. "It beats me," he said.

"I've got it!" I exclaimed suddenly. "Look there!" And I pointed at the base of the cliff ahead of us, which the receding tide was gradually exposing to our view. They all looked, and all saw what I had seen—the top of a dark opening in the rock, through which water was pouring out into the sea. "It's the subterranean channel of an inland river," I cried. "It flows through a land covered with vegetation—and therefore a land upon which the sun shines. No subterranean caverns produce any order of plant life even remotely resembling what we have seen disgorged by this river. Beyond those cliffs lie fertile lands and fresh water—perhaps, game!"

"Yis, sir," said Olson, "behoind the cliffs! Ye spoke a true word, sir—behoind!"

Bradley laughed—a rather sorry laugh, though. "You might as well call our attention to the fact, sir," he said, "that science has indicated that there is fresh water and vegetation on Mars."

"Not at all," I rejoined. "A U-boat isn't constructed to navigate space, but it is designed to travel below the surface of the water."

"You'd be after sailin' into that blank pocket?" asked Olson.

"I would, Olson," I replied. "We haven't one chance for life in a hundred thousand if we don't find food and water upon Caprona. This water coming out of the cliff is not salt; but neither is it fit to drink, though each of us has drunk. It is fair to assume that inland the river is fed by pure streams, that there are fruits and herbs and game. Shall we lie out here and die of thirst and starvation with a land of plenty possibly only a few hundred yards away? We have the means for navigating a subterranean river. Are we too cowardly to utilize this means?"

"Be afther goin' to it," said Olson.

"I'm willing to see it through," agreed Bradley.

"Then under the bottom, wi' the best o' luck an' give 'em hell!" cried a young fellow

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

who had been in the trenches.

“To the diving-stations!” I commanded, and in less than a minute the deck was deserted, the conning-tower covers had slammed to and the U-33 was submerging—possibly for the last time. I know that I had this feeling, and I think that most of the others did.

As we went down, I sat in the tower with the searchlight projecting its seemingly feeble rays ahead. We submerged very slowly and without headway more than sufficient to keep her nose in the right direction, and as we went down, I saw outlined ahead of us the black opening in the great cliff. It was an opening that would have admitted a half-dozen U-boats at one and the same time, roughly cylindrical in contour—and dark as the pit of perdition.

As I gave the command which sent the U-33 slowly ahead, I could not but feel a certain uncanny presentiment of evil. Where were we going? What lay at the end of this great sewer? Had we bidden farewell forever to the sunlight and life, or were there before us dangers even greater than those which we now faced? I tried to keep my mind from vain imagining by calling everything which I observed to the eager ears below. I was the eyes of the whole company, and I did my best not to fail them. We had advanced a hundred yards, perhaps, when our first danger confronted us. Just ahead was a sharp right-angle turn in the tunnel. I could see the river’s flotsam hurtling against the rocky wall upon the left as it was driven on by the mighty current, and I feared for the safety of the U-33 in making so sharp a turn under such adverse conditions; but there was nothing for it but to try. I didn’t warn my fellows of the danger—it could have but caused them useless apprehension, for if we were to be smashed against the rocky wall, no power on earth could avert the quick end that would come to us. I gave the command full speed ahead and went charging toward the menace. I was forced to approach the dangerous left-hand wall in order to make the turn, and I depended upon the power of the motors to carry us through the surging waters in safety. Well, we made it; but it was a narrow squeak. As we swung around, the full force of the current caught us and drove the stern against the rocks; there was a thud which sent a tremor through the whole craft, and then a moment of nasty grinding as the steel hull scraped the rock wall. I expected momentarily the inrush of waters that would seal our doom; but presently from below came the welcome word that all was well.

In another fifty yards there was a second turn, this time toward the left! but it was more of a gentle curve, and we took it without trouble. After that it was plain sailing, though as far as I could know, there might be most anything ahead of us, and my nerves strained to the snapping-point every instant. After the second turn the channel ran comparatively straight for between one hundred and fifty and two hundred yards. The waters grew suddenly lighter, and my spirits rose accordingly.

shouted down to those below that I saw daylight ahead, and a great shout of thanksgiving reverberated through the ship. A moment later we emerged into sunlit water, and immediately I raised the periscope and looked about me upon the strangest landscape I had ever seen.

We were in the middle of a broad and now sluggish river the banks of which were lined by giant, arboraceous ferns, raising their mighty fronds fifty, one hundred, two hundred feet into the quiet air. Close by us something rose to the surface of the river and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

dashed at the periscope. I had a vision of wide, distended jaws, and then all was blotted out. A shiver ran down into the tower as the thing closed upon the periscope. A moment later it was gone, and I could see again. Above the trees there soared into my vision a huge thing on batlike wings—a creature large as a large whale, but fashioned more after the order of a lizard. Then again something charged the periscope and blotted out the mirror. I will confess that I was almost gasping for breath as I gave the commands to emerge. Into what sort of strange land had fate guided us?

The instant the deck was awash, I opened the conning-tower hatch and stepped out. In another minute the deck-hatch lifted, and those who were not on duty below streamed up the ladder, Olson bringing Nobs under one arm. For several minutes no one spoke; I think they must each have been as overcome by awe as was I. All about us was a flora and fauna as strange and wonderful to us as might have been those upon a distant planet had we suddenly been miraculously transported through ether to an unknown world. Even the grass upon the nearer bank was unearthly—lush and high it grew, and each blade bore upon its tip a brilliant flower—violet or yellow or carmine or blue—making as gorgeous a sward as human imagination might conceive. But the life! It teemed. The tall, fernlike trees were alive with monkeys, snakes, and lizards. Huge insects hummed and buzzed hither and thither. Mighty forms could be seen moving upon the ground in the thick forest, while the bosom of the river wriggled with living things, and above flapped the wings of gigantic creatures such as we are taught have been extinct throughout countless ages.

“Look!” cried Olson. “Would you look at the giraffe comin’ up out o’ the bottom of the say?” We looked in the direction he pointed and saw a long, glossy neck surmounted by a small head rising above the surface of the river. Presently the back of the creature was exposed, brown and glossy as the water dripped from it. It turned its eyes upon us, opened its lizard-like mouth, emitted a shrill hiss and came for us. The thing must have been sixteen or eighteen feet in length and closely resembled pictures I had seen of restored plesiosaurs of the lower Jurassic. It charged us as savagely as a mad bull, and one would have thought it intended to destroy and devour the mighty U-boat, as I verily believe it did intend.

We were moving slowly up the river as the creature bore down upon us with distended jaws. The long neck was far outstretched, and the four flippers with which it swam were working with powerful strokes, carrying it forward at a rapid pace. When it reached the craft’s side, the jaws closed upon one of the stanchions of the deck rail and tore it from its socket as though it had been a toothpick stuck in putty. At this exhibition of titanic strength I think we all simultaneously stepped backward, and Bradley drew his revolver and fired. The bullet struck the thing in the neck, just above its body; but instead of disabling it, merely increased its rage. Its hissing rose to a shrill scream as it raised half its body out of water onto the sloping sides of the hull of the U-33 and endeavored to scramble upon the deck to devour us. A dozen shots rang out as we who were armed drew our pistols and fired at the thing; but though struck several times, it showed no signs of succumbing and only floundered farther aboard the submarine.

I had noticed that the girl had come on deck and was standing not far behind me, and when I saw the danger to which we were all exposed, I turned and forced her toward

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the hatch. We had not spoken for some days, and we did not speak now; but she gave me a disdainful look, which was quite as eloquent as words, and broke loose from my grasp. I saw I could do nothing with her unless I exerted force, and so I turned with my back toward her that I might be in a position to shield her from the strange reptile should it really succeed in reaching the deck; and as I did so I saw the thing raise one flipper over the rail, dart its head forward and with the quickness of lightning seize upon one of the boches. I ran forward, discharging my pistol into the creature's body in an effort to force it to relinquish its prey; but I might as profitably have shot at the sun.

Shrieking and screaming, the German was dragged from the deck, and the moment the reptile was clear of the boat, it dived beneath the surface of the water with its terrified prey. I think we were all more or less shaken by the frightfulness of the tragedy—until Olson remarked that the balance of power now rested where it belonged. Following the death of Benson we had been nine and nine—nine Germans and nine "Allies," as we called ourselves, now there were but eight Germans. We never counted the girl on either side, I suppose because she was a girl, though we knew well enough now that she was ours.

And so Olson's remark helped to clear the atmosphere for the Allies at least, and then our attention was once more directed toward the river, for around us there had sprung up a perfect bedlam of screams and hisses and a seething caldron of hideous reptiles, devoid of fear and filled only with hunger and with rage. They clambered, squirmed and wriggled to the deck, forcing us steadily backward, though we emptied our pistols into them. There were all sorts and conditions of horrible things—huge, hideous, grotesque, monstrous—a veritable Mesozoic nightmare. I saw that the girl was gotten below as quickly as possible, and she took Nobs with her—poor Nobs had nearly barked his head off; and I think, too, that for the first time since his littlest puppyhood he had known fear; nor can I blame him. After the girl I sent Bradley and most of the Allies and then the Germans who were on deck—von Schoenvorts being still in irons below.

The creatures were approaching perilously close before I dropped through the hatchway and slammed down the cover. Then I went into the tower and ordered full speed ahead, hoping to distance the fearsome things; but it was useless. Not only could any of them easily outdistance the U-33, but the further upstream we progressed the greater the number of our besiegers, until fearful of navigating a strange river at high speed, I gave orders to reduce and moved slowly and majestically through the plunging, hissing mass. I was mighty glad that our entrance into the interior of Caprona had been inside a submarine rather than in any other form of vessel. I could readily understand how it might have been that Caprona had been invaded in the past by venturesome navigators without word of it ever reaching the outside world, for I can assure you that only by submarine could man pass up that great sluggish river, alive.

We proceeded up the river for some forty miles before darkness overtook us. I was afraid to submerge and lie on the bottom overnight for fear that the mud might be deep enough to hold us, and as we could not hold with the anchor, I ran in close to shore, and in a brief interim of attack from the reptiles we made fast to a large tree. We also dipped up some of the river water and found it, though quite warm, a little sweeter than before. We had food enough, and with the water we were all quite refreshed; but we missed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

fresh meat. It had been weeks, now, since we had tasted it, and the sight of the reptiles gave me an idea—that a steak or two from one of them might not be bad eating. So I went on deck with a rifle, twenty of which were aboard the U-33. At sight of me a huge thing charged and climbed to the deck. I retreated to the top of the conning-tower, and when it had raised its mighty bulk to the level of the little deck on which I stood, I let it have a bullet right between the eyes.

The thing stopped then and looked at me a moment as much as to say: “Why this thing has a stinger! I must be careful.” And then it reached out its long neck and opened its mighty jaws and grabbed for me; but I wasn’t there. I had tumbled backward into the tower, and I might have nearly killed myself doing it. When I glanced up, that little head on the end of its long neck was coming straight down on top of me, and once more I tumbled into greater safety, sprawling upon the floor of the centrale.

Olson was looking up, and seeing what was poking about in the tower, ran for an ax; nor did he hesitate a moment when he returned with one, but sprang up the ladder and commenced chopping away at that hideous face. The thing didn’t have sufficient brainpan to entertain more than a single idea at once. Though chopped and hacked, and with a bullethole between its eyes, it still persisted madly in its attempt to get inside the tower and devour Olson, though its body was many times the diameter of the hatch; nor did it cease its efforts until after Olson had succeeded in decapitating it. Then the two men went on deck through the main hatch, and while one kept watch, the other cut a hind quarter off *Plesiosaurus Olsoni*, as Bradley dubbed the thing. Meantime Olson cut off the long neck, saying that it would make fine soup. By the time we had cleared away the blood and refuse in the tower, the cook had juicy steaks and a steaming broth upon the electric stove, and the aroma arising from *P. Olsoni* filled us all with a hitherto unfelt admiration for him and all his kind.

The steaks we had that night, and they were fine; and the following morning we tasted the broth. It seemed odd to be eating a creature that should, by all the laws of paleontology, have been extinct for several million years. It gave one a feeling of newness that was almost embarrassing, although it didn’t seem to embarrass our appetites. Olson ate until I thought he would burst.

The girl ate with us that night at the little officers’ mess just back of the torpedo compartment. The narrow table was unfolded; the four stools were set out; and for the first time in days we sat down to eat, and for the first time in weeks we had something to eat other than the monotony of the short rations of an impoverished U-boat. Nobs sat between the girl and me and was fed with morsels of the *Plesiosaurus* steak, at the risk of forever contaminating his manners. He looked at me sheepishly all the time, for he knew that no well-bred dog should eat at table; but the poor fellow was so wasted from improper food that I couldn’t enjoy my own meal had he been denied an immediate share in it; and anyway Lys wanted to feed him. So there you are.

Lys was coldly polite to me and sweetly gracious to Bradley and Olson. She wasn’t of the gushing type, I knew; so I didn’t expect much from her and was duly grateful for the few morsels of attention she threw upon the floor to me. We had a pleasant meal, with only one unfortunate occurrence—when Olson suggested that possibly the creature we were eating was the same one that ate the German.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

It was some time before we could persuade the girl to continue her meal, but at last Bradley prevailed upon her, pointing out that we had come upstream nearly forty miles since the boche had been seized, and that during that time we had seen literally thousands of these denizens of the river, indicating that the chances were very remote that this was the same Plesiosaur. "And anyway," he concluded, "it was only a scheme of Mr. Olson's to get all the steaks for himself."

We discussed the future and ventured opinions as to what lay before us; but we could only theorize at best, for none of us knew. If the whole land was infested by these and similar horrid monsters, life would be impossible upon it, and we decided that we would only search long enough to find and take aboard fresh water and such meat and fruits as might be safely procurable and then retrace our way beneath the cliffs to the open sea.

And so at last we turned into our narrow bunks, hopeful, happy and at peace with ourselves, our lives and our God, to awaken the following morning refreshed and still optimistic. We had an easy time getting away—as we learned later, because the saurians do not commence to feed until late in the morning. From noon to midnight their curve of activity is at its height, while from dawn to about nine o'clock it is lowest. As a matter of fact, we didn't see one of them all the time we were getting under way, though I had the cannon raised to the deck and manned against an assault. I hoped, but I was none too sure, that shells might discourage them. The trees were full of monkeys of all sizes and shades, and once we thought we saw a manlike creature watching us from the depth of the forest.

Shortly after we resumed our course upstream, we saw the mouth of another and smaller river emptying into the main channel from the south—that is, upon our right; and almost immediately after we came upon a large island five or six miles in length; and at fifty miles there was a still larger river than the last coming in from the northwest, the course of the main stream having now changed to northeast by southwest. The water was quite free from reptiles, and the vegetation upon the banks of the river had altered to more open and parklike forest, with eucalyptus and acacia mingled with a scattering of tree ferns, as though two distinct periods of geologic time had overlapped and merged. The grass, too, was less flowering, though there were still gorgeous patches mottling the greensward; and lastly, the fauna was less multitudinous.

Six or seven miles farther, and the river widened considerably; before us opened an expanse of water to the farther horizon, and then we sailed out upon an inland sea so large that only a shoreline upon our side was visible to us. The waters all about us were alive with life. There were still a few reptiles; but there were fish by the thousands, by the millions.

The water of the inland sea was very warm, almost hot, and the atmosphere was hot and heavy above it. It seemed strange that beyond the buttressed walls of Caprona icebergs floated and the south wind was biting, for only a gentle breeze moved across the face of these living waters, and that was damp and warm. Gradually, we commenced to divest ourselves of our clothing, retaining only sufficient for modesty; but the sun was not hot. It was more the heat of a steam-room than of an oven.

We coasted up the shore of the lake in a northwesterly direction, sounding all the time. We found the lake deep and the bottom rocky and steeply shelving toward the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

center, and once when I moved straight out from shore to take other soundings we could find no bottom whatsoever. In open spaces along the shore we caught occasional glimpses of the distant cliffs, and here they appeared only a trifle less precipitous than those which bound Caprona on the seaward side. My theory is that in a far distant era Caprona was a mighty mountain— perhaps the world's mightiest volcanic action blew off the entire crest, blew thousands of feet of the mountain upward and outward and onto the surrounding continent, leaving a great crater; and then, possibly, the continent sank as ancient continents have been known to do, leaving only the summit of Caprona above the sea. The encircling walls, the central lake, the hot springs which feed the lake, all point to a conclusion, and the fauna and the flora bear indisputable evidence that Caprona was once part of some great landmass.

As we cruised up along the coast, the landscape continued a more or less open forest, with here and there a small plain where we saw animals grazing. With my glass I could make out a species of large red deer, some antelope and what appeared to be a species of horse; and once I saw the shaggy form of what might have been a monstrous bison. Here was game a plenty! There seemed little danger of starving upon Caprona. The game, however, seemed wary; for the instant the animals discovered us, they threw up their heads and tails and went cavorting off, those farther inland following the example of the others until all were lost in the mazes of the distant forest. Only the great, shaggy ox stood his ground. With lowered head he watched us until we had passed, and then continued feeding.

About twenty miles up the coast from the mouth of the river we encountered low cliffs of sandstone, broken and tortured evidence of the great upheaval which had torn Caprona asunder in the past, intermingling upon a common level the rock formations of widely separated eras, fusing some and leaving others untouched.

We ran along beside them for a matter of ten miles, arriving off a broad cleft which led into what appeared to be another lake. As we were in search of pure water, we did not wish to overlook any portion of the coast, and so after sounding and finding that we had ample depth, I ran the U-33 between headlands into as pretty a landlocked harbor as sailormen could care to see, with good water right up to within a few yards of the shore. As we cruised slowly along, two of the boches again saw what they believed to be a man, or manlike creature, watching us from a fringe of trees a hundred yards inland, and shortly after we discovered the mouth of a small stream emptying into the bay: It was the first stream we had found since leaving the river, and I at once made preparations to test its water. To land, it would be necessary to run the U33 close in to the shore, at least as close as we could, for even these waters were infested, though, not so thickly, by savage reptiles. I ordered sufficient water let into the diving-tanks to lower us about a foot, and then I ran the bow slowly toward the shore, confident that should we run aground, we still had sufficient lifting force to free us when the water should be pumped out of the tanks; but the bow nosed its way gently into the reeds and touched the shore with the keel still clear.

My men were all armed now with both rifles and pistols, each having plenty of ammunition. I ordered one of the Germans ashore with a line, and sent two of my own men to guard him, for from what little we had seen of Caprona, or Caspak as we learned later

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

to call the interior, we realized that any instant some new and terrible danger might confront us. The line was made fast to a small tree, and at the same time I had the stern anchor dropped.

As soon as the boche and his guard were aboard again, I called all hands on deck, including von Schoenvorts, and there I explained to them that the time had come for us to enter into some sort of an agreement among ourselves that would relieve us of the annoyance and embarrassment of being divided into two antagonistic parts—prisoners and captors. I told them that it was obvious our very existence depended upon our unity of action, that we were to all intent and purpose entering a new world as far from the seat and causes of our own world-war as if millions of miles of space and eons of time separated us from our past lives and habitations.

“There is no reason why we should carry our racial and political hatreds into Caprona,” I insisted. “The Germans among us might kill all the English, or the English might kill the last German, without affecting in the slightest degree either the outcome of even the smallest skirmish upon the western front or the opinion of a single individual in any belligerent or neutral country. I therefore put the issue squarely to you all; shall we bury our animosities and work together with and for one another while we remain upon Caprona, or must we continue thus divided and but half armed, possibly until death has claimed the last of us? And let me tell you, if you have not already realized it, the chances are a thousand to one that not one of us ever will see the outside world again. We are safe now in the matter of food and water; we could provision the U-33 for a long cruise; but we are practically out of fuel, and without fuel we cannot hope to reach the ocean, as only a submarine can pass through the barrier cliffs. What is your answer?” I turned toward von Schoenvorts.

He eyed me in that disagreeable way of his and demanded to know, in case they accepted my suggestion, what their status would be in event of our finding a way to escape with the U-33. I replied that I felt that if we had all worked loyally together we should leave Caprona upon a common footing, and to that end I suggested that should the remote possibility of our escape in the submarine develop into reality, we should then immediately make for the nearest neutral port and give ourselves into the hands of the authorities, when we should all probably be interned for the duration of the war. To my surprise he agreed that this was fair and told me that they would accept my conditions and that I could depend upon their loyalty to the common cause.

I thanked him and then addressed each one of his men individually, and each gave me his word that he would abide by all that I had outlined. It was further understood that we were to act as a military organization under military rules and discipline—I as commander, with Bradley as my first lieutenant and Olson as my second, in command of the Englishmen; while von Schoenvorts was to act as an additional second lieutenant and have charge of his own men. The four of us were to constitute a military court under which men might be tried and sentenced to punishment for infraction of military rules and discipline, even to the passing of the death-sentence.

I then had arms and ammunition issued to the Germans, and leaving Bradley and five men to guard the U-33, the balance of us went ashore. The first thing we did was to taste the water of the little stream—which, to our delight, we found sweet, pure and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

cold. This stream was entirely free from dangerous reptiles, because, as I later discovered, they became immediately dormant when subjected to a much lower temperature than 70 degrees Fahrenheit. They dislike cold water and keep as far away from it as possible. There were countless brook-trout here, and deep holes that invited us to bathe, and along the bank of the stream were trees bearing a close resemblance to ash and beech and oak, their characteristics evidently induced by the lower temperature of the air above the cold water and by the fact that their roots were watered by the water from the stream rather than from the warm springs which we afterward found in such abundance elsewhere.

Our first concern was to fill the water tanks of the U-33 with fresh water, and that having been accomplished, we set out to hunt for game and explore inland for a short distance. Olson, von Schoenvorts, two Englishmen and two Germans accompanied me, leaving ten to guard the ship and the girl. I had intended leaving Nobs behind, but he got away and joined me and was so happy over it that I hadn't the heart to send him back. We followed the stream upward through a beautiful country for about five miles, and then came upon its source in a little boulder-strewn clearing. From among the rocks bubbled fully twenty ice-cold springs. North of the clearing rose sandstone cliffs to a height of some fifty to seventy-five feet, with tall trees growing at their base and almost concealing them from our view. To the west the country was flat and sparsely wooded, and here it was that we saw our first game—a large red deer. It was grazing away from us and had not seen us when one of my men called my attention to it. Motioning for silence and having the rest of the party lie down, I crept toward the quarry, accompanied only by Whitely. We got within a hundred yards of the deer when he suddenly raised his antlered head and pricked up his great ears. We both fired at once and had the satisfaction of seeing the buck drop; then we ran forward to finish him with our knives. The deer lay in a small open space close to a clump of acacias, and we had advanced to within several yards of our kill when we both halted suddenly and simultaneously. Whitely looked at me, and I looked at Whitely, and then we both looked back in the direction of the deer. "Blime!" he said. "Wot is hit, sir?"

"It looks to me, Whitely, like an error," I said; "some assistant god who had been creating elephants must have been temporarily transferred to the lizard-department."

"Hi wouldn't s'y that, sir," said Whitely; "it sounds blasphemous."

"It is more blasphemous than that thing which is swiping our meat," I replied, for whatever the thing was, it had leaped upon our deer and was devouring it in great mouthfuls which it swallowed without mastication. The creature appeared to be a great lizard at least ten feet high, with a huge, powerful tail as long as its torso, mighty hind legs and short forelegs. When it had advanced from the wood, it hopped much after the fashion of a kangaroo, using its hind feet and tail to propel it, and when it stood erect, it sat upon its tail. Its head was long and thick, with a blunt muzzle, and the opening of the jaws ran back to a point behind the eyes, and the jaws were armed with long sharp teeth. The scaly body was covered with black and yellow spots about a foot in diameter and irregular in contour. These spots were outlined in red with edgings about an inch wide. The underside of the chest, body and tail were a greenish white.

"Wot s'y we pot the bloomin' bird, sir?" suggested Whitely.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I told him to wait until I gave the word; then we would fire simultaneously, he at the heart and I at the spine.

"Hat the 'eart, sir—yes, sir," he replied, and raised his piece to his shoulder.

Our shots rang out together. The thing raised its head and looked about until its eyes rested upon us; then it gave vent to a most appalling hiss that rose to the crescendo of a terrific shriek and came for us.

"Beat it, Whitely!" I cried as I turned to run.

We were about a quarter of a mile from the rest of our party, and in full sight of them as they lay in the tall grass watching us. That they saw all that had happened was evidenced by the fact that they now rose and ran toward us, and at their head leaped Nobs. The creature in our rear was gaining on us rapidly when Nobs flew past me like a meteor and rushed straight for the frightful reptile. I tried to recall him, but he would pay no attention to me, and as I couldn't see him sacrificed, I, too, stopped and faced the monster. The creature appeared to be more impressed with Nobs than by us and our firearms, for it stopped as the Airedale dashed at it growling, and struck at him viciously with its powerful jaws.

Nobs, though, was lightning by comparison with the slow thinking beast and dodged his opponent's thrust with ease. Then he raced to the rear of the tremendous thing and seized it by the tail. There Nobs made the error of his life. Within that mottled organ were the muscles of a Titan, the force of a dozen mighty catapults, and the owner of the tail was fully aware of the possibilities which it contained. With a single flip of the tip it sent poor Nobs sailing through the air a hundred feet above the ground, straight back into the clump of acacias from which the beast had leaped upon our kill—and then the grotesque thing sank lifeless to the ground.

Olson and von Schoenvorts came up a minute later with their men; then we all cautiously approached the still form upon the ground. The creature was quite dead, and an examination resulted in disclosing the fact that Whitely's bullet had pierced its heart, and mine had severed the spinal cord.

"But why didn't it die instantly?" I exclaimed.

"Because," said von Schoenvorts in his disagreeable way, "the beast is so large, and its nervous organization of so low a caliber, that it took all this time for the intelligence of death to reach and be impressed upon the minute brain. The thing was dead when your bullets struck it; but it did not know it for several seconds—possibly a minute. If I am not mistaken, it is an Allosaurus of the Upper Jurassic, remains of which have been found in Central Wyoming, in the suburbs of New York."

An Irishman by the name of Brady grinned. I afterward learned that he had served three years on the traffic-squad of the Chicago police force.

I had been calling Nobs in the meantime and was about to set out in search of him, fearing, to tell the truth, to do so lest I find him mangled and dead among the trees of the acacia grove, when he suddenly emerged from among the boles, his ears flattened, his tail between his legs and his body screwed into a suppliant S. He was unharmed except for minor bruises; but he was the most chastened dog I have ever seen.

We gathered up what was left of the red deer after skinning and cleaning it, and set

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

out upon our return journey toward the U-boat. On the way Olson, von Schoenvorts and I discussed the needs of our immediate future, and we were unanimous in placing foremost the necessity of a permanent camp on shore. The interior of a U-boat is about as impossible and uncomfortable an abiding-place as one can well imagine, and in this warm climate, and in warm water, it was almost unendurable. So we decided to construct a palisaded camp.

As we strolled slowly back toward the boat, planning and discussing this, we were suddenly startled by a loud and unmistakable detonation.

"A shell from the U-33!" exclaimed von Schoenvorts.

"What can be after signifyin'?" queried Olson.

"They are in trouble," I answered for all, "and it's up to us to get back to them. Drop that carcass," I directed the men carrying the meat, "and follow me!" I set off at a rapid run in the direction of the harbor.

We ran for the better part of a mile without hearing anything more from the direction of the harbor, and then I reduced the speed to a walk, for the exercise was telling on us who had been cooped up for so long in the confined interior of the U-33. Puffing and panting, we plodded on until within about a mile of the harbor we came upon a sight that brought us all up standing. We had been passing through a little heavier timber than was usual to this part of the country, when we suddenly emerged into an open space in the center of which was such a band as might have caused the most courageous to pause. It consisted of upward of five hundred individuals representing several species closely allied to man. There were anthropoid apes and gorillas—these I had no difficulty in recognizing; but there were other forms which I had never before seen, and I was hard put to it to say whether they were ape or man. Some of them resembled the corpse we had found upon the narrow beach against Caprona's sea-wall, while others were of a still lower type, more nearly resembling the apes, and yet others were uncannily manlike, standing there erect, being less hairy and possessing better shaped heads.

There was one among the lot, evidently the leader of them, who bore a close resemblance to the so-called Neanderthal man of La Chapelle-aux-Saints. There was the same short, stocky trunk upon which rested an enormous head habitually bent forward into the same curvature as the back, the arms shorter than the legs, and the lower leg considerably shorter than that of modern man, the knees bent forward and never straightened. This creature and one or two others who appeared to be of a lower order than he, yet higher than that of the apes, carried heavy clubs; the others were armed only with giant muscles and fighting fangs—nature's weapons. All were males, and all were entirely naked; nor was there upon even the highest among them a sign of ornamentation.

At sight of us they turned with bared fangs and low growls to confront us. I did not wish to fire among them unless it became absolutely necessary, and so I started to lead my party around them; but the instant that the Neanderthal man guessed my intention, he evidently attributed it to cowardice upon our part, and with a wild cry he leaped toward us, waving his cudgel above his head. The others followed him, and in a minute we should have been overwhelmed. I gave the order to fire, and at the first volley six of them went down, including the Neanderthal man. The others hesitated a moment and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

then broke for the trees, some running nimbly among the branches, while others lost themselves to us between the boles. Both von Schoenvorts and I noticed that at least two of the higher, manlike types took to the trees quite as nimbly as the apes, while others that more nearly approached man in carriage and appearance sought safety upon the ground with the gorillas.

An examination disclosed that five of our erstwhile opponents were dead and the sixth, the Neanderthal man, was but slightly wounded, a bullet having glanced from his thick skull, stunning him. We decided to take him with us to camp, and by means of belts we managed to secure his hands behind his back and place a leash around his neck before he regained consciousness. We then retraced our steps for our meat being convinced by our own experience that those aboard the U-33 had been able to frighten off this party with a single shell—but when we came to where we had left the deer it had disappeared.

On the return journey Whitely and I preceded the rest of the party by about a hundred yards in the hope of getting another shot at something edible, for we were all greatly disgusted and disappointed by the loss of our venison. Whitely and I advanced very cautiously, and not having the whole party with us, we fared better than on the journey out, bagging two large antelope not a half-mile from the harbor; so with our game and our prisoner we made a cheerful return to the boat, where we found that all were safe.

On the shore a little north of where we lay there were the corpses of twenty of the wild creatures who had attacked Bradley and his party in our absence, and the rest of whom we had met and scattered a few minutes later.

We felt that we had taught these wild ape-men a lesson and that because of it we would be safer in the future—at least safer from them; but we decided not to abate our carefulness one whit; feeling that this new world was filled with terrors still unknown to us; nor were we wrong. The following morning we commenced work upon our camp, Bradley, Olson, von Schoenvorts, Miss La Rue, and I having sat up half the night discussing the matter and drawing plans. We set the men at work felling trees, selecting for the purpose jarrah, a hard, weather-resisting timber which grew in profusion near by. Half the men labored while the other half stood guard, alternating each hour with an hour off at noon. Olson directed this work. Bradley, von Schoenvorts and I, with Miss La Rue's help, staked out the various buildings and the outer wall. When the day was done, we had quite an array of logs nicely notched and ready for our building operations on the morrow, and we were all tired, for after the buildings had been staked out we all fell in and helped with the logging—all but von Schoenvorts. He, being a Prussian and a gentleman, couldn't stoop to such menial labor in the presence of his men, and I didn't see fit to ask it of him, as the work was purely voluntary upon our part. He spent the afternoon shaping a swagger-stick from the branch of jarrah and talking with Miss La Rue, who had sufficiently unbent toward him to notice his existence.

We saw nothing of the wild men of the previous day, and only once were we menaced by any of the strange denizens of Caprona, when some frightful nightmare of the sky swooped down upon us, only to be driven off by a fusillade of bullets. The thing appeared to be some variety of pterodactyl, and what with its enormous size and ferocious aspect was most awe-inspiring. There was another incident, too, which to me at

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

least was far more unpleasant than the sudden onslaught of the prehistoric reptile. Two of the men, both Germans, were stripping a felled tree of its branches. Von Schoenvorts had completed his swagger-stick, and he and I were passing close to where the two worked.

One of them threw to his rear a small branch that he had just chopped off, and as misfortune would have it, it struck von Schoenvorts across the face. It couldn't have hurt him, for it didn't leave a mark; but he flew into a terrific rage, shouting: "Attention!" in a loud voice. The sailor immediately straightened up, faced his officer, clicked his heels together and saluted. "Pig!" roared the Baron, and struck the fellow across the face, breaking his nose. I grabbed von Schoenvorts' arm and jerked him away before he could strike again, if such had been his intention, and then he raised his little stick to strike me; but before it descended the muzzle of my pistol was against his belly and he must have seen in my eyes that nothing would suit me better than an excuse to pull the trigger. Like all his kind and all other bullies, von Schoenvorts was a coward at heart, and so he dropped his hand to his side and started to turn away; but I pulled him back, and there before his men I told him that such a thing must never again occur—that no man was to be struck or otherwise punished other than in due process of the laws that we had made and the court that we had established. All the time the sailor stood rigidly at attention, nor could I tell from his expression whether he most resented the blow his officer had struck him or my interference in the gospel of the Kaiser-breed. Nor did he move until I said to him: "Plesser, you may return to your quarters and dress your wound." Then he saluted and marched stiffly off toward the U-33.

Just before dusk we moved out into the bay a hundred yards from shore and dropped anchor, for I felt that we should be safer there than elsewhere. I also detailed men to stand watch during the night and appointed Olson officer of the watch for the entire night, telling him to bring his blankets on deck and get what rest he could. At dinner we tasted our first roast Caprona antelope, and we had a mess of greens that the cook had found growing along the stream. All during the meal von Schoenvorts was silent and surly.

After dinner we all went on deck and watched the unfamiliar scenes of a Capronian night—that is, all but von Schoenvorts. There was less to see than to hear. From the great inland lake behind us came the hissing and the screaming of countless saurians. Above us we heard the flap of giant wings, while from the shore rose the multitudinous voices of a tropical jungle—of a warm, damp atmosphere such as must have enveloped the entire earth during the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras. But here were intermingled the voices of later eras—the scream of the panther, the roar of the lion, the baying of wolves and a thunderous growling which we could attribute to nothing earthly but which one day we were to connect with the most fearsome of ancient creatures.

One by one the others went to their rooms, until the girl and I were left alone together, for I had permitted the watch to go below for a few minutes, knowing that I would be on deck. Miss La Rue was very quiet, though she replied graciously enough to whatever I had to say that required reply. I asked her if she did not feel well.

"Yes," she said, "but I am depressed by the awfulness of it all. I feel of so little consequence— so small and helpless in the face of all these myriad manifestations of life stripped to the bone of its savagery and brutality. I realize as never before how cheap

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and valueless a thing is life. Life seems a joke, a cruel, grim joke. You are a laughable incident or a terrifying one as you happen to be less powerful or more powerful than some other form of life which crosses your path; but as a rule you are of no moment whatsoever to anything but yourself. You are a comic little figure, hopping from the cradle to the grave. Yes, that is our trouble—we take ourselves too seriously; but Caprona should be a sure cure for that.” She paused and laughed.

“You have evolved a beautiful philosophy,” I said. “It fills such a longing in the human breast. It is full, it is satisfying, it is ennobling. What wondrous strides toward perfection the human race might have made if the first man had evolved it and it had persisted until now as the creed of humanity.”

“I don’t like irony,” she said; “it indicates a small soul.”

“What other sort of soul, then, would you expect from ‘a comic little figure hopping from the cradle to the grave’?” I inquired. “And what difference does it make, anyway, what you like and what you don’t like? You are here for but an instant, and you mustn’t take yourself too seriously.”

She looked up at me with a smile. “I imagine that I am frightened and blue,” she said, “and I know that I am very, very homesick and lonely.” There was almost a sob in her voice as she concluded. It was the first time that she had spoken thus to me. Involuntarily, I laid my hand upon hers where it rested on the rail.

“I know how difficult your position is,” I said; “but don’t feel that you are alone. There is—is one here who—who would do anything in the world for you,” I ended lamely. She did not withdraw her hand, and she looked up into my face with tears on her cheeks and I read in her eyes the thanks her lips could not voice. Then she looked away across the weird moonlit landscape and sighed. Evidently her new-found philosophy had tumbled about her ears, for she was seemingly taking herself seriously. I wanted to take her in my arms and tell her how I loved her, and had taken her hand from the rail and started to draw her toward me when Olson came blundering up on deck with his bedding.

The following morning we started building operations in earnest, and things progressed finely. The Neanderthal man was something of a care, for we had to keep him in irons all the time, and he was mighty savage when approached; but after a time he became more docile, and then we tried to discover if he had a language. Lys spent a great deal of time talking to him and trying to draw him out; but for a long while she was unsuccessful. It took us three weeks to build all the houses, which we constructed close by a cold spring some two miles from the harbor.

We changed our plans a trifle when it came to building the palisade, for we found a rotted cliff near by where we could get all the flat building-stone we needed, and so we constructed a stone wall entirely around the buildings. It was in the form of a square, with bastions and towers at each corner which would permit an enfilading fire along any side of the fort, and was about one hundred and thirty-five feet square on the outside, with walls three feet thick at the bottom and about a foot and a half wide at the top, and fifteen feet high. It took a long time to build that wall, and we all turned in and helped except von Schoenvorts, who, by the way, had not spoken to me except in the line of official business since our encounter—a condition of armed neutrality which suited me

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

to a T. We have just finished it, the last touches being put on today. I quit about a week ago and commenced working on this chronicle for our strange adventures, which will account for any minor errors in chronology which may have crept in; there was so much material that I may have made some mistakes, but I think they are but minor and few.

I see in reading over the last few pages that I neglected to state that Lys finally discovered that the Neanderthal man possessed a language. She had learned to speak it, and so have I, to some extent. It was he—his name he says is Am, or Ahm—who told us that this country is called Caspak. When we asked him how far it extended, he waved both arms about his head in an all-including gesture which took in, apparently, the entire universe. He is more tractable now, and we are going to release him, for he has assured us that he will not permit his fellows to harm us.

He calls us Galus and says that in a short time he will be a Galu. It is not quite clear to us what he means. He says that there are many Galus north of us, and that as soon as he becomes one he will go and live with them.

Ahm went out to hunt with us yesterday and was much impressed by the ease with which our rifles brought down antelopes and deer. We have been living upon the fat of the land, Ahm, having shown us the edible fruits, tubers and herbs, and twice a week we go out after fresh meat. A certain proportion of this we dry and store away, for we do not know what may come. Our drying process is really smoking. We have also dried a large quantity of two varieties of cereal which grow wild a few miles south of us. One of these is a giant Indian maize—a lofty perennial often fifty and sixty feet in height, with ears the size off a man's body and kernels as large as your fist. We have had to construct a second store house for the great quantity of this that we have gathered.

September 3, 1916: Three months ago today the torpedo from the U-33 started me from the peaceful deck of the American liner upon the strange voyage which has ended here in Caspak. We have settled down to an acceptance of our fate, for all are convinced that none of us will ever see the outer world again. Ahm's repeated assertions that there are human beings like ourselves in Caspak have roused the men to a keen desire for exploration. I sent out one party last week under Bradley. Ahm, who is now free to go and come as he wishes, accompanied them. They marched about twenty-five miles due west, encountering many terrible beasts and reptiles and not a few manlike creatures whom Ahm sent away. Here is Bradley's report of the expedition:

Marched fifteen miles the first day, camping on the bank of a large stream which runs southward. Game was plentiful and we saw several varieties which we had not before encountered in Caspak. Just before making camp we were charged by an enormous woolly rhinoceros, which Plesser dropped with a perfect shot. We had rhinoceros-steaks for supper. Ahm called the thing "Atis." It was almost a continuous battle from the time we left the fort until we arrived at camp. The mind of man can scarce conceive the plethora of carnivorous life in this lost world; and their prey, of course, is even more abundant.

The second day we marched about ten miles to the foot of the cliffs. Passed through dense forests close to the base of the cliffs. Saw manlike creatures and a low order of ape in one band, and some of the men swore that there was a white man among them. They were inclined to attack us at first; but a volley from our rifles caused them to change their

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

minds. We scaled the cliffs as far as we could; but near the top they are absolutely perpendicular without any sufficient cleft or protuberance to give hand or foot-hold. All were disappointed, for we hungered for a view of the ocean and the outside world. We even had a hope that we might see and attract the attention of a passing ship. Our exploration has determined one thing which will probably be of little value to us and never heard of beyond Caprona's walls—this crater was once entirely filled with water. Indisputable evidence of this is on the face of the cliffs.

Our return journey occupied two days and was as filled with adventure as usual. We are all becoming accustomed to adventure. It is beginning to pall on us. We suffered no casualties and there was no illness.

I had to smile as I read Bradley's report. In those four days he had doubtless passed through more adventures than an African big-game hunter experiences in a lifetime, and yet he covered it all in a few lines. Yes, we are becoming accustomed to adventure. Not a day passes that one or more of us does not face death at least once. Ahm taught us a few things that have proved profitable and saved us much ammunition, which it is useless to expend except for food or in the last recourse of self-preservation. Now when we are attacked by large flying reptiles we run beneath spreading trees; when land carnivora threaten us, we climb into trees, and we have learned not to fire at any of the dinosaurs unless we can keep out of their reach for at least two minutes after hitting them in the brain or spine, or five minutes after puncturing their hearts—it takes them so long to die. To hit them elsewhere is worse than useless, for they do not seem to notice it, and we had discovered that such shots do not kill or even disable them.

September 7, 1916: Much has happened since I last wrote. Bradley is away again on another exploration expedition to the cliffs. He expects to be gone several weeks and to follow along their base in search of a point where they may be scaled. He took Sinclair, Brady, James, and Tippet with him. Ahm has disappeared. He has been gone about three days; but the most startling thing I have on record is that von Schoenvorts and Olson while out hunting the other day discovered oil about fifteen miles north of us beyond the sandstone cliffs. Olson says there is a geyser of oil there, and von Schoenvorts is making preparations to refine it. If he succeeds, we shall have the means for leaving Caspak and returning to our own world. I can scarce believe the truth of it. We are all elated to the seventh heaven of bliss. Pray God we shall not be disappointed.

I have tried on several occasions to broach the subject of my love to Lys; but she will not listen.

October 8, 1916: This is the last entry I shall make upon my manuscript. When this is done, I shall be through. Though I may pray that it reaches the haunts of civilized man, my better judgment tells me that it will never be perused by other eyes than mine, and that even though it should, it would be too late to avail me. I am alone upon the summit of the great cliff overlooking the broad Pacific. A chill south wind bites at my marrow, while far below me I can see the tropic foliage of Caspak on the one hand and huge icebergs from the near Antarctic upon the other. Presently I shall stuff my folded manuscript into the thermos bottle I have carried with me for the purpose since I left the fort—Fort Dinosaur we named it—and hurl it far outward over the cliff-top into the Pacific. What current washes the shore of Caprona I know not; whither my bottle will be borne I

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

cannot even guess; but I have done all that mortal man may do to notify the world of my whereabouts and the dangers that threaten those of us who remain alive in Caspak—if there be any other than myself.

About the 8th of September I accompanied Olson and von Schoenvorts to the oil-geyser. Lys came with us, and we took a number of things which von Schoenvorts wanted for the purpose of erecting a crude refinery. We went up the coast some ten or twelve miles in the U-33, tying up to shore near the mouth of a small stream which emptied great volumes of crude oil into the sea—I find it difficult to call this great lake by any other name. Then we disembarked and went inland about five miles, where we came upon a small lake entirely filled with oil, from the center of which a geyser of oil spouted.

On the edge of the lake we helped von Schoenvorts build his primitive refinery. We worked with him for two days until he got things fairly well started, and then we returned to Fort Dinosaur, as I feared that Bradley might return and be worried by our absence. The U-33 merely landed those of us that were to return to the fort and then retraced its course toward the oil-well. Olson, Whitely, Wilson, Miss La Rue, and myself disembarked, while von Schoenvorts and his German crew returned to refine the oil. The next day Plesser and two other Germans came down overland for ammunition. Plesser said they had been attacked by wild men and had exhausted a great deal of ammunition. He also asked permission to get some dried meat and maize, saying that they were so busy with the work of refining that they had no time to hunt. I let him have everything he asked for, and never once did a suspicion of their intentions enter my mind. They returned to the oil-well the same day, while we continued with the multitudinous duties of camp life.

For three days nothing of moment occurred. Bradley did not return; nor did we have any word from von Schoenvorts. In the evening Lys and I went up into one of the bastion towers and listened to the grim and terrible nightlife of the frightful ages of the past. Once a saber-tooth screamed almost beneath us, and the girl shrank close against me. As I felt her body against mine, all the pent love of these three long months shattered the bonds of timidity and conviction, and I swept her up into my arms and covered her face and lips with kisses. She did not struggle to free herself; but instead her dear arms crept up about my neck and drew my own face even closer to hers.

“You love me, Lys?” I cried.

I felt her head nod an affirmative against my breast. “Tell me, Lys,” I begged, “tell me in words how much you love me.”

Low and sweet and tender came the answer: “I love you beyond all conception.”

My heart filled with rapture then, and it fills now as it has each of the countless times I have recalled those dear words, as it shall fill always until death has claimed me. I may never see her again; she may not know how I love her—she may question, she may doubt; but always true and steady, and warm with the fires of love my heart beats for the girl who said that night: “I love you beyond all conception.”

For a long time we sat there upon the little bench constructed for the sentry that we had not as yet thought it necessary to post in more than one of the four towers. We learned to know one another better in those two brief hours than we had in all the months that had intervened since we had been thrown together. She told me that she had loved me from

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the first, and that she never had loved von Schoenvorts, their engagement having been arranged by her aunt for social reasons.

That was the happiest evening of my life; nor ever do I expect to experience its like; but at last, as is the way of happiness, it terminated. We descended to the compound, and I walked with Lys to the door of her quarters. There again she kissed me and bade me good night, and then she went in and closed the door.

I went to my own room, and there I sat by the light of one of the crude candles we had made from the tallow of the beasts we had killed, and lived over the events of the evening. At last I turned in and fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams and planning for the future, for even in savage Caspak I was bound to make my girl safe and happy. It was daylight when I awoke. Wilson, who was acting as cook, was up and astir at his duties in the cook-house. The others slept; but I arose and followed by Nobs went down to the stream for a plunge. As was our custom, I went armed with both rifle and revolver; but I stripped and had my swim without further disturbance than the approach of a large hyena, a number of which occupied caves in the sandstone cliffs north of the camp. These brutes are enormous and exceedingly ferocious. I imagine they correspond with the cave-hyena of prehistoric times. This fellow charged Nobs, whose Capronian experiences had taught him that discretion is the better part of valor—with the result that he dived head foremost into the stream beside me after giving vent to a series of ferocious growls which had no more effect upon *Hyaena spelaeus* than might a sweet smile upon an enraged tusker. Afterward I shot the beast, and Nobs had a feast while I dressed, for he had become quite a raw-meat eater during our numerous hunting expeditions, upon which we always gave him a portion of the kill.

Whitely and Olson were up and dressed when we returned, and we all sat down to a good breakfast. I could not but wonder at Lys' absence from the table, for she had always been one of the earliest risers in camp; so about nine o'clock, becoming apprehensive lest she might be indisposed, I went to the door of her room and knocked. I received no response, though I finally pounded with all my strength; then I turned the knob and entered, only to find that she was not there. Her bed had been occupied, and her clothing lay where she had placed it the previous night upon retiring; but Lys was gone. To say that I was distracted with terror would be to put it mildly. Though I knew she could not be in camp, I searched every square inch of the compound and all the buildings, yet without avail.

It was Whitely who discovered the first clue—a huge humanlike footprint in the soft earth beside the spring, and indications of a struggle in the mud.

Then I found a tiny handkerchief close to the outer wall. Lys had been stolen! It was all too plain. Some hideous member of the ape-man tribe had entered the fort and carried her off. While I stood stunned and horrified at the frightful evidence before me, there came from the direction of the great lake an increasing sound that rose to the volume of a shriek. We all looked up as the noise approached apparently just above us, and a moment later there followed a terrific explosion which hurled us to the ground. When we clambered to our feet, we saw a large section of the west wall torn and shattered. It was Olson who first recovered from his daze sufficiently to guess the explanation of the phenomenon.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"A shell!" he cried. "And there ain't no shells in Caspak besides what's on the U-33. The dirty boches are shellin' the fort. Come on!" And he grasped his rifle and started on a run toward the lake. It was over two miles, but we did not pause until the harbor was in view, and still we could not see the lake because of the sandstone cliffs which intervened. We ran as fast as we could around the lower end of the harbor, scrambled up the cliffs and at last stood upon their summit in full view of the lake. Far away down the coast, toward the river through which we had come to reach the lake, we saw upon the surface the outline of the U-33, black smoke vomiting from her funnel.

Von Schoenvorts had succeeded in refining the oil! The cur had broken his every pledge and was leaving us there to our fates. He had even shelled the fort as a parting compliment; nor could anything have been more truly Prussian than this leave-taking of the Baron Friedrich von Schoenvorts.

Olson, Whitely, Wilson, and I stood for a moment looking at one another. It seemed incredible that man could be so perfidious—that we had really seen with our own eyes the thing that we had seen; but when we returned to the fort, the shattered wall gave us ample evidence that there was no mistake.

Then we began to speculate as to whether it had been an ape-man or a Prussian that had abducted Lys. From what we knew of von Schoenvorts, we would not have been surprised at anything from him; but the footprints by the spring seemed indisputable evidence that one of Caprona's undeveloped men had borne off the girl I loved.

As soon as I had assured myself that such was the case, I made my preparations to follow and rescue her. Olson, Whitely, and Wilson each wished to accompany me; but I told them that they were needed here, since with Bradley's party still absent and the Germans gone it was necessary that we conserve our force as far as might be possible.

It was a sad leave-taking as in silence I shook hands with each of the three remaining men. Even poor Nobs appeared dejected as we quit the compound and set out upon the well-marked spoor of the abductor. Not once did I turn my eyes backward toward Fort Dinosaur. I have not looked upon it since—nor in all likelihood shall I ever look upon it again. The trail led northwest until it reached the western end of the sandstone cliffs to the north of the fort; there it ran into a well-defined path which wound northward into a country we had not as yet explored. It was a beautiful, gently rolling country, broken by occasional outcroppings of sandstone and by patches of dense forest relieved by open, parklike stretches and broad meadows whereon grazed countless herbivorous animals—red deer, aurochs, and infinite variety of antelope and at least three distinct species of horse, the latter ranging in size from a creature about as large as Nobs to a magnificent animal fourteen to sixteen hands high. These creatures fed together in perfect amity; nor did they show any great indications of terror when Nobs and I approached. They moved out of our way and kept their eyes upon us until we had passed; then they resumed their feeding.

The path led straight across the clearing into another forest, lying upon the verge of which I saw a bit of white. It appeared to stand out in marked contrast and incongruity to all its surroundings, and when I stopped to examine it, I found that it was a small strip of muslin—part of the hem of a garment. At once I was all excitement, for I knew that it was a sign left by Lys that she had been carried this way; it was a tiny bit torn from the hem of

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the undergarment that she wore in lieu of the night-robes she had lost with the sinking of the liner. Crushing the bit of fabric to my lips, I pressed on even more rapidly than before, because I now knew that I was upon the right trail and that up to this, point at least, Lys still had lived.

I made over twenty miles that day, for I was now hardened to fatigue and accustomed to long hikes, having spent considerable time hunting and exploring in the immediate vicinity of camp. A dozen times that day was my life threatened by fearsome creatures of the earth or sky, though I could not but note that the farther north I traveled, the fewer were the great dinosaurs, though they still persisted in lesser numbers. On the other hand the quantity of ruminants and the variety and frequency of carnivorous animals increased. Each square mile of Caspak harbored its terrors.

At intervals along the way I found bits of muslin, and often they reassured me when otherwise I should have been doubtful of the trail to take where two crossed or where there were forks, as occurred at several points. And so, as night was drawing on, I came to the southern end of a line of cliffs loftier than any I had seen before, and as I approached them, there was wafted to my nostrils the pungent aroma of woodsmoke. What could it mean? There could, to my mind, be but a single solution: man abided close by, a higher order of man than we had as yet seen, other than Ahm, the Neanderthal man. I wondered again as I had so many times that day if it had not been Ahm who stole Lys.

Cautiously I approached the flank of the cliffs, where they terminated in an abrupt escarpment as though some all powerful hand had broken off a great section of rock and set it upon the surface of the earth. It was now quite dark, and as I crept around the edge of the cliff, I saw at a little distance a great fire around which were many figures—apparently human figures. Cautioning Nobs to silence, and he had learned many lessons in the value of obedience since we had entered Caspak, I slunk forward, taking advantage of whatever cover I could find, until from behind a bush I could distinctly see the creatures assembled by the fire. They were human and yet not human. I should say that they were a little higher in the scale of evolution than Ahm, possibly occupying a place of evolution between that of the Neanderthal man and what is known as the Grimaldi race. Their features were distinctly negroid, though their skins were white. A considerable portion of both torso and limbs were covered with short hair, and their physical proportions were in many aspects apelike, though not so much so as were Ahm's. They carried themselves in a more erect position, although their arms were considerably longer than those of the Neanderthal man. As I watched them, I saw that they possessed a language, that they had knowledge of fire and that they carried besides the wooden club of Ahm, a thing which resembled a crude stone hatchet. Evidently they were very low in the scale of humanity, but they were a step upward from those I had previously seen in Caspak.

But what interested me most was the slender figure of a dainty girl, clad only in a thin bit of muslin which scarce covered her knees—a bit of muslin torn and ragged about the lower hem. It was Lys, and she was alive and so far as I could see, unharmed. A huge brute with thick lips and prognathous jaw stood at her shoulder. He was talking loudly and gesticulating wildly. I was close enough to hear his words, which were similar to the language of Ahm, though much fuller, for there were many words I could not understand. However I caught the gist of what he was saying—which in effect was that he had

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

found and captured this Galu, that she was his and that he defied anyone to question his right of possession. It appeared to me, as I afterward learned was the fact, that I was witnessing the most primitive of marriage ceremonies. The assembled members of the tribe looked on and listened in a sort of dull and perfunctory apathy, for the speaker was by far the mightiest of the clan.

There seemed no one to dispute his claims when he said, or rather shouted, in stentorian tones: "I am Tsa. This is my she. Who wishes her more than Tsa?"

"I do," I said in the language of Ahm, and I stepped out into the firelight before them. Lys gave a little cry of joy and started toward me, but Tsa grasped her arm and dragged her back.

"Who are you?" shrieked Tsa. "I kill! I kill! I kill!"

"The she is mine," I replied, "and I have come to claim her. I kill if you do not let her come to me." And I raised my pistol to a level with his heart. Of course the creature had no conception of the purpose of the strange little implement which I was poking toward him. With a sound that was half human and half the growl of a wild beast, he sprang toward me. I aimed at his heart and fired, and as he sprawled headlong to the ground, the others of his tribe, overcome by fright at the report of the pistol, scattered toward the cliffs—while Lys, with outstretched arms, ran toward me.

As I crushed her to me, there rose from the black night behind us and then to our right and to our left a series of frightful screams and shrieks, bellowings, roars and growls. It was the night-life of this jungle world coming into its own—the huge, carnivorous nocturnal beasts which make the nights of Caspak hideous. A shuddering sob ran through Lys' figure. "O God," she cried, "give me the strength to endure, for his sake!" I saw that she was upon the verge of a breakdown, after all that she must have passed through of fear and horror that day, and I tried to quiet and reassure her as best I might; but even to me the future looked most unpromising, for what chance of life had we against the frightful hunters of the night who even now were prowling closer to us?

Now I turned to see what had become of the tribe, and in the fitful glare of the fire I perceived that the face of the cliff was pitted with large holes into which the man-things were clambering. "Come," I said to Lys, "we must follow them. We cannot last a half-hour out here. We must find a cave." Already we could see the blazing green eyes of the hungry carnivora. I seized a brand from the fire and hurled it out into the night, and there came back an answering chorus of savage and rageful protest; but the eyes vanished for a short time. Selecting a burning branch for each of us, we advanced toward the cliffs, where we were met by angry threats.

"They will kill us," said Lys. "We may as well keep on in search of another refuge."

"They will not kill us so surely as will those others out there," I replied. "I am going to seek shelter in one of these caves; nor will the man-things prevent." And I kept on in the direction of the cliff's base. A huge creature stood upon a ledge and brandished his stone hatchet. "Come and I will kill you and take the she," he boasted.

"You saw how Tsa fared when he would have kept my she," I replied in his own tongue. "Thus will you fare and all your fellows if you do not permit us to come in peace among you out of the dangers of the night."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Go north," he screamed. "Go north among the Galus, and we will not harm you. Some day will we be Galus; but now we are not. You do not belong among us. Go away or we will kill you. The she may remain if she is afraid, and we will keep her; but the he must depart."

"The he won't depart," I replied, and approached still nearer. Rough and narrow ledges formed by nature gave access to the upper caves. A man might scale them if unhampered and unhindered, but to clamber upward in the face of a belligerent tribe of half-men and with a girl to assist was beyond my capability.

"I do not fear you," screamed the creature. "You were close to Tsa; but I am far above you. You cannot harm me as you harmed Tsa. Go away!"

I placed a foot upon the lowest ledge and clambered upward, reaching down and pulling Lys to my side. Already I felt safer. Soon we would be out of danger of the beasts again closing in upon us. The man above us raised his stone hatchet above his head and leaped lightly down to meet us. His position above me gave him a great advantage, or at least so he probably thought, for he came with every show of confidence. I hated to do it, but there seemed no other way, and so I shot him down as I had shot down Tsa.

"You see," I cried to his fellows, "that I can kill you wherever you may be. A long way off I can kill you as well as I can kill you near by. Let us come among you in peace. I will not harm you if you do not harm us. We will take a cave high up. Speak!"

"Come, then," said one. "If you will not harm us, you may come. Take Tsa's hole, which lies above you."

The creature showed us the mouth of a black cave, but he kept at a distance while he did it, and Lys followed me as I crawled in to explore. I had matches with me, and in the light of one I found a small cavern with a flat roof and floor which followed the cleavage of the strata. Pieces of the roof had fallen at some long-distant date, as was evidenced by the depth of the filth and rubble in which they were embedded. Even a superficial examination revealed the fact that nothing had ever been attempted that might have improved the livability of the cavern; nor, should I judge, had it ever been cleaned out. With considerable difficulty I loosened some of the larger pieces of broken rock which littered the floor and placed them as a barrier before the doorway. It was too dark to do more than this. I then gave Lys a piece of dried meat, and sitting inside the entrance, we dined as must have some of our ancient forbears at the dawning of the age of man, while far below the open diapason of the savage night rose weird and horrifying to our ears. In the light of the great fire still burning we could see huge, skulking forms, and in the blacker background countless flaming eyes.

Lys shuddered, and I put my arm around her and drew her to me; and thus we sat throughout the hot night. She told me of her abduction and of the fright she had undergone, and together we thanked God that she had come through unharmed, because the great brute had dared not pause along the danger-infested way. She said that they had but just reached the cliffs when I arrived, for on several occasions her captor had been forced to take to the trees with her to escape the clutches of some hungry cave-lion or saber-toothed tiger, and that twice they had been obliged to remain for considerable periods before the beasts had retired.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Nobs, by dint of much scrambling and one or two narrow escapes from death, had managed to follow us up the cliff and was now curled between me and the doorway, having devoured a piece of the dried meat, which he seemed to relish immensely. He was the first to fall asleep; but I imagine we must have followed suit soon, for we were both tired. I had laid aside my ammunition-belt and rifle, though both were close beside me; but my pistol I kept in my lap beneath my hand. However, we were not disturbed during the night, and when I awoke, the sun was shining on the treetops in the distance. Lys' head had drooped to my breast, and my arm was still about her.

Shortly afterward Lys awoke, and for a moment she could not seem to comprehend her situation. She looked at me and then turned and glanced at my arm about her, and then she seemed quite suddenly to realize the scantiness of her apparel and drew away, covering her face with her palms and blushing furiously. I drew her back toward me and kissed her, and then she threw her arms about my neck and wept softly in mute surrender to the inevitable.

It was an hour later before the tribe began to stir about. We watched them from our "apartment," as Lys called it. Neither men nor women wore any sort of clothing or ornaments, and they all seemed to be about of an age; nor were there any babies or children among them. This was, to us, the strangest and most inexplicable of facts, but it recalled to us that though we had seen many of the lesser developed wild people of Caspak, we had never yet seen a child or an old man or woman.

After a while they became less suspicious of us and then quite friendly in their brutish way. They picked at the fabric of our clothing, which seemed to interest them, and examined my rifle and pistol and the ammunition in the belt around my waist. I showed them the thermos-bottle, and when I poured a little water from it, they were delighted, thinking that it was a spring which I carried about with me—a never-failing source of water supply.

One thing we both noticed among their other characteristics: they never laughed nor smiled; and then we remembered that Ahm had never done so, either. I asked them if they knew Ahm; but they said they did not.

One of them said: "Back there we may have known him." And he jerked his head to the south.

"You came from back there?" I asked. He looked at me in surprise.

"We all come from there," he said. "After a while we go there." And this time he jerked his head toward the north. "Be Galus," he concluded.

Many times now had we heard this reference to becoming Galus. Ahm had spoken of it many times. Lys and I decided that it was a sort of original religious conviction, as much a part of them as their instinct for self-preservation—a primal acceptance of a hereafter and a holier state. It was a brilliant theory, but it was all wrong. I know it now, and how far we were from guessing the wonderful, the miraculous, the gigantic truth which even yet I may only guess at—the thing that sets Caspak apart from all the rest of the world far more definitely than her isolated geographical position or her impregnable barrier of giant cliffs. If I could live to return to civilization, I should have meat for the clergy and the layman to chew upon for years—and for the evolutionists, too.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

After breakfast the men set out to hunt, while the women went to a large pool of warm water covered with a green scum and filled with billions of tadpoles. They waded in to where the water was about a foot deep and lay down in the mud. They remained there from one to two hours and then returned to the cliff. While we were with them, we saw this same thing repeated every morning; but though we asked them why they did it we could get no reply which was intelligible to us. All they vouchsafed in way of explanation was the single word Ata. They tried to get Lys to go in with them and could not understand why she refused. After the first day I went hunting with the men, leaving my pistol and Nobs with Lys, but she never had to use them, for no reptile or beast ever approached the pool while the women were there—nor, so far as we know, at other times. There was no spoor of wild beast in the soft mud along the banks, and the water certainly didn't look fit to drink.

This tribe lived largely upon the smaller animals which they bowled over with their stone hatchets after making a wide circle about their quarry and driving it so that it had to pass close to one of their number. The little horses and the smaller antelope they secured in sufficient numbers to support life, and they also ate numerous varieties of fruits and vegetables. They never brought in more than sufficient food for their immediate needs; but why bother? The food problem of Caspak is not one to cause worry to her inhabitants.

The fourth day Lys told me that she thought she felt equal to attempting the return journey on the morrow, and so I set out for the hunt in high spirits, for I was anxious to return to the fort and learn if Bradley and his party had returned and what had been the result of his expedition. I also wanted to relieve their minds as to Lys and myself, as I knew that they must have already given us up for dead. It was a cloudy day, though warm, as it always is in Caspak. It seemed odd to realize that just a few miles away winter lay upon the storm-tossed ocean, and that snow might be falling all about Caprona; but no snow could ever penetrate the damp, hot atmosphere of the great crater.

We had to go quite a bit farther than usual before we could surround a little bunch of antelope, and as I was helping drive them, I saw a fine red deer a couple of hundred yards behind me. He must have been asleep in the long grass, for I saw him rise and look about him in a bewildered way, and then I raised my gun and let him have it. He dropped, and I ran forward to finish him with the long thin knife, which one of the men had given me; but just as I reached him, he staggered to his feet and ran on for another two hundred yards—when I dropped him again. Once more was this repeated before I was able to reach him and cut his throat; then I looked around for my companions, as I wanted them to come and carry the meat home; but I could see nothing of them. I called a few times and waited, but there was no response and no one came. At last I became disgusted, and cutting off all the meat that I could conveniently carry, I set off in the direction of the cliffs. I must have gone about a mile before the truth dawned upon me—I was lost, hopelessly lost.

The entire sky was still completely blotted out by dense clouds; nor was there any landmark visible by which I might have taken my bearings. I went on in the direction I thought was south but which I now imagine must have been about due north, without detecting a single familiar object. In a dense wood I suddenly stumbled upon a thing

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

which at first filled me with hope and later with the most utter despair and dejection. It was a little mound of new-turned earth sprinkled with flowers long since withered, and at one end was a flat slab of sandstone stuck in the ground. It was a grave, and it meant for me that I had at last stumbled into a country inhabited by human beings. I would find them; they would direct me to the cliffs; perhaps they would accompany me and take us back with them to their abodes—to the abodes of men and women like ourselves. My hopes and my imagination ran riot in the few yards I had to cover to reach that lonely grave and stoop that I might read the rude characters scratched upon the simple headstone. This is what I read:

HERE LIES JOHN TIPPET
ENGLISHMAN KILLED
BY TYRANNOSAURUS
10 SEPT., A.D. 1916 R. I. P.

Tippet! It seemed incredible. Tippet lying here in this gloomy wood! Tippet dead! He had been a good man, but the personal loss was not what affected me. It was the fact that this silent grave gave evidence that Bradley had come this far upon his expedition and that he too probably was lost, for it was not our intention that he should be long gone. If I had stumbled upon the grave of one of the party, was it not within reason to believe that the bones of the others lay scattered somewhere near?

As I stood looking down upon that sad and lonely mound, wrapped in the most dismal of reflections and premonitions, I was suddenly seized from behind and thrown to earth. As I fell, a warm body fell on top of me, and hands grasped my arms and legs. When I could look up, I saw a number of giant fingers pinioning me down, while others stood about surveying me. Here again was a new type of man—a higher type than the primitive tribe I had just quitted. They were a taller people, too, with better-shaped skulls and more intelligent faces. There were less of the ape characteristics about their features, and less of the negroid, too.

They carried weapons, stone-shod spears, stone knives, and hatchets—and they wore ornaments and breechcloths—the former of feathers worn in their hair and the latter made of a single snakeskin cured with the head on, the head depending to their knees.

Of course I did not take in all these details upon the instant of my capture, for I was busy with other matters. Three of the warriors were sitting upon me, trying to hold me down by main strength and awkwardness, and they were having their hands full in the doing, I can tell you. I don't like to appear conceited, but I may as well admit that I am proud of my strength and the science that I have acquired and developed in the directing of it—that and my horsemanship I always have been proud of. And now, that day, all the long hours that I had put into careful study, practice and training brought me in two or three minutes a full return upon my investment. Californians, as a rule, are familiar with jujitsu, and I especially had made a study of it for several years, both at school and in the gym of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, while recently I had had, in my employ, a Jap who was a wonder at the art.

It took me just about thirty seconds to break the elbow of one of my assailants, trip

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

another and send him stumbling backward among his fellows, and throw the third completely over my head in such a way that when he fell his neck was broken. In the instant that the others of the party stood in mute and inactive surprise, I unslung my rifle—which, carelessly, I had been carrying across my back; and when they charged, as I felt they would, I put a bullet in the forehead of one of them. This stopped them all temporarily—not the death of their fellow, but the report of the rifle, the first they had ever heard. Before they were ready to attack me again, one of them spoke in a commanding tone to his fellows, and in a language similar but still more comprehensive than that of the tribe to the south, as theirs was more complete than Ahm's. He commanded them to stand back and then he advanced and addressed me.

He asked me who I was, from whence I came and what my intentions were. I replied that I was a stranger in Caspak, that I was lost and that my only desire was to find my way back to my companions. He asked where they were and I told him toward the south somewhere, using the Caspakian phrase which, literally translated, means "toward the beginning." His surprise showed upon his face before he voiced it in words. "There are no Galus there," he said.

"I tell you," I said angrily, "that I am from another country, far from Caspak, far beyond the high cliffs. I do not know who the Galus may be; I have never seen them. This is the farthest north I have been. Look at me—look at my clothing and my weapons. Have you ever seen a Galu or any other creature in Caspak who possessed such things?"

He had to admit that he had not, and also that he was much interested in me, my rifle and the way I had handled his three warriors. Finally he became half convinced that I was telling him the truth and offered to aid me if I would show him how I had thrown the man over my head and also make him a present of the "bang-spear," as he called it. I refused to give him my rifle, but promised to show him the trick he wished to learn if he would guide me in the right direction. He told me that he would do so tomorrow, that it was too late today and that I might come to their village and spend the night with them. I was loath to lose so much time; but the fellow was obdurate, and so I accompanied them. The two dead men they left where they had fallen, nor gave them a second glance—thus cheap is life upon Caspak.

These people also were cave-dwellers, but their caves showed the result of a higher intelligence that brought them a step nearer to civilized man than the tribe next "toward the beginning." The interiors of their caverns were cleared of rubbish, though still far from clean, and they had pallets of dried grasses covered with the skins of leopard, lynx, and bear, while before the entrances were barriers of stone and small, rudely circular stone ovens. The walls of the cavern to which I was conducted were covered with drawings scratched upon the sandstone. There were the outlines of the giant red-deer, of mammoths, of tigers and other beasts. Here, as in the last tribe, there were no children or any old people. The men of this tribe had two names, or rather names of two syllables, and their language contained words of two syllables; whereas in the tribe of Tsa the words were all of a single syllable, with the exception of a very few like Atis and Galus.

The chief's name was To-jo, and his household consisted of seven females and himself. These women were much more comely, or rather less hideous than those of Tsa's people; one of them, even, was almost pretty, being less hairy and having a rather nice

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

skin, with high coloring.

They were all much interested in me and examined my clothing and equipment carefully, handling and feeling and smelling of each article. I learned from them that their people were known as Bandlu, or spear-men; Tsa's race was called Stolu—hatchetmen. Below these in the scale of evolution came the Bo-lu, or club-men, and then the Alus, who had no weapons and no language. In that word I recognized what to me seemed the most remarkable discovery I had made upon Caprona, for unless it were mere coincidence, I had come upon a word that had been handed down from the beginning of spoken language upon earth, been handed down for millions of years, perhaps, with little change. It was the sole remaining thread of the ancient woof of a dawning culture which had been woven when Caprona was a fiery mount upon a great landmass teeming with life. It linked the unfathomable then to the eternal now. And yet it may have been pure coincidence; my better judgment tells me that it is coincidence that in Caspak the term for speechless man is Alus, and in the outer world of our own day it is Alalus.

The comely woman of whom I spoke was called So-ta, and she took such a lively interest in me that To-jo finally objected to her attentions, emphasizing his displeasure by knocking her down and kicking her into a corner of the cavern. I leaped between them while he was still kicking her, and obtaining a quick hold upon him, dragged him screaming with pain from the cave. Then I made him promise not to hurt the she again, upon pain of worse punishment. So-ta gave me a grateful look; but To-jo and the balance of his women were sullen and ominous.

Later in the evening So-ta confided to me that she was soon to leave the tribe.

"So-ta soon to be Kro-lu," she confided in a low whisper. I asked her what a Kro-lu might be, and she tried to explain, but I do not yet know if I understood her. From her gestures I deduced that the Kro-lus were a people who were armed with bows and arrows, had vessels in which to cook their food and huts of some sort in which they lived, and were accompanied by animals. It was all very fragmentary and vague, but the idea seemed to be that the Kro-lus were a more advanced people than the Band-lus. I pondered a long time upon all that I had heard, before sleep came to me. I tried to find some connection between these various races that would explain the universal hope which each of them harbored that some day they would become Galus. So-ta had given me a suggestion; but the resulting idea was so weird that I could scarce even entertain it; yet it coincided with Ahm's expressed hope, with the various steps in evolution I had noted in the several tribes I had encountered and with the range of type represented in each tribe. For example, among the Band-lu were such types as Sota, who seemed to me to be the highest in the scale of evolution, and To-jo, who was just a shade nearer the ape, while there were others who had flatter noses, more prognathous faces and hairier bodies. The question puzzled me. Possibly in the outer world the answer to it is locked in the bosom of the Sphinx. Who knows? I do not.

Thinking the thoughts of a lunatic or a dope-fiend, I fell asleep; and when I awoke, my hands and feet were securely tied and my weapons had been taken from me. How they did it without awakening me I cannot tell you. It was humiliating, but it was true. Tojo stood above me. The early light of morning was dimly filtering into the cave.

"Tell me," he demanded, "how to throw a man over my head and break his neck, for

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I am going to kill you, and I wish to know this thing before you die.”

Of all the ingenuous declarations I have ever heard, this one copped the proverbial bun. It struck me as so funny that, even in the face of death, I laughed. Death, I may remark here, had, however, lost much of his terror for me. I had become a disciple of Lys' fleeting philosophy of the valuelessness of human life. I realized that she was quite right—that we were but comic figures hopping from the cradle to the grave, of interest to practically no other created thing than ourselves and our few intimates.

Behind To-jo stood So-ta. She raised one hand with the palm toward me—the Caspakian equivalent of a negative shake of the head.

“Let me think about it,” I parried, and To-jo said that he would wait until night. He would give me a day to think it over; then he left, and the women left—the men for the hunt, and the women, as I later learned from So-ta, for the warm pool where they immersed their bodies as did the shes of the Stolu. “Ata,” explained So-ta, when I questioned her as to the purpose of this matutinal rite; but that was later.

I must have lain there bound and uncomfortable for two or three hours when at last So-ta entered the cave. She carried a sharp knife—mine, in fact, and with it she cut my bonds.

“Come!” she said. “So-ta will go with you back to the Galus. It is time that So-ta left the Band-lu. Together we will go to the Kro-lu, and after that the Galus. To-jo will kill you tonight. He will kill So-ta if he knows that So-ta aided you. We will go together.”

“I will go with you to the Kro-lu,” I replied, “but then I must return to my own people toward the beginning.”

“You cannot go back,” she said. “It is forbidden. They would kill you. Thus far have you come—there is no returning.”

“But I must return,” I insisted. “My people are there. I must return and lead them in this direction.”

She insisted, and I insisted; but at last we compromised. I was to escort her as far as the country of the Kro-lu and then I was to go back after my own people and lead them north into a land where the dangers were fewer and the people less murderous. She brought me all my belongings that had been filched from me—rifle, ammunition, knife, and thermos bottle, and then hand in hand we descended the cliff and set off toward the north.

For three days we continued upon our way, until we arrived outside a village of thatched huts just at dusk. So-ta said that she would enter alone; I must not be seen if I did not intend to remain, as it was forbidden that one should return and live after having advanced this far. So she left me. She was a dear girl and a stanch and true comrade—more like a man than a woman. In her simple barbaric way she was both refined and chaste. She had been the wife of To-jo. Among the Kro-lu she would find another mate after the manner of the strange Caspakian world; but she told me very frankly that whenever I returned, she would leave her mate and come to me, as she preferred me above all others. I was becoming a ladies' man after a lifetime of bashfulness!

At the outskirts of the village I left her without even seeing the sort of people who inhabited it, and set off through the growing darkness toward the south. On the third day

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I made a detour westward to avoid the country of the Band-lu, as I did not care to be detained by a meeting with To-jo. On the sixth day I came to the cliffs of the Sto-lu, and my heart beat fast as I approached them, for here was Lys. Soon I would hold her tight in my arms again; soon her warm lips would merge with mine. I felt sure that she was still safe among the hatchet people, and I was already picturing the joy and the love-light in her eyes when she should see me once more as I emerged from the last clump of trees and almost ran toward the cliffs.

It was late in the morning. The women must have returned from the pool; yet as I drew near, I saw no sign of life whatever. "They have remained longer," I thought; but when I was quite close to the base of the cliffs, I saw that which dashed my hopes and my happiness to earth. Strewn along the ground were a score of mute and horrible suggestions of what had taken place during my absence—bones picked clean of flesh, the bones of manlike creatures, the bones of many of the tribe of Sto-lu; nor in any cave was there sign of life.

Closely I examined the ghastly remains fearful each instant that I should find the dainty skull that would shatter my happiness for life; but though I searched diligently, picking up every one of the twenty-odd skulls, I found none that was the skull of a creature but slightly removed from the ape. Hope, then, still lived. For another three days I searched north and south, east and west for the hatchetmen of Caspak; but never a trace of them did I find. It was raining most of the time now, and the weather was as near cold as it ever seems to get on Caprona.

At last I gave up the search and set off toward Fort Dinosaur. For a week—a week filled with the terrors and dangers of a primeval world—I pushed on in the direction I thought was south. The sun never shone; the rain scarcely ever ceased falling.

The beasts I met with were fewer in number but infinitely more terrible in temper; yet I lived on until there came to me the realization that I was hopelessly lost, that a year of sunshine would not again give me my bearings; and while I was cast down by this terrifying knowledge, the knowledge that I never again could find Lys, I stumbled upon another grave—the grave of William James, with its little crude headstone and its scrawled characters recording that he had died upon the 13th of September—killed by a saber-tooth tiger.

I think that I almost gave up then. Never in my life have I felt more hopeless or helpless or alone. I was lost. I could not find my friends. I did not even know that they still lived; in fact, I could not bring myself to believe that they did. I was sure that Lys was dead. I wanted myself to die, and yet I clung to life—useless and hopeless and harrowing a thing as it had become. I clung to life because some ancient, reptilian forbear had clung to life and transmitted to me through the ages the most powerful motive that guided his minute brain—the motive of self-preservation.

At last I came to the great barrier-cliffs; and after three days of mad effort—of maniacal effort—I scaled them. I built crude ladders; I wedged sticks in narrow fissures; I chopped toeholds and finger-holds with my long knife; but at last I scaled them. Near the summit I came upon a huge cavern. It is the abode of some mighty winged creature of the Triassic—or rather it was. Now it is mine. I slew the thing and took its abode. I reached the summit and looked out upon the broad gray terrible Pacific of the far-southern win-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ter. It was cold up there. It is cold here today; yet here I sit watching, watching, watching for the thing I know will never come—for a sail.

Once a day I descend to the base of the cliff and hunt, and fill my stomach with water from a clear cold spring. I have three gourds which I fill with water and take back to my cave against the long nights. I have fashioned a spear and a bow and arrow, that I may conserve my ammunition, which is running low. My clothes are worn to shreds. Tomorrow I shall discard them for leopard-skins which I have tanned and sewn into a garment strong and warm. It is cold up here. I have a fire burning and I sit bent over it while I write; but I am safe here. No other living creature ventures to the chill summit of the barrier cliffs. I am safe, and I am alone with my sorrows and my remembered joys—but without hope. It is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast; but there is none in mine.

I am about done. Presently I shall fold these pages and push them into my thermos bottle. I shall cork it and screw the cap tight, and then I shall hurl it as far out into the sea as my strength will permit. The wind is offshore; the tide is running out; perhaps it will be carried into one of those numerous ocean-currents which sweep perpetually from pole to pole and from continent to continent, to be deposited at last upon some inhabited shore. If fate is kind and this does happen, then, for God's sake, come and get me!

It was a week ago that I wrote the preceding paragraph, which I thought would end the written record of my life upon Caprona. I had paused to put a new point on my quill and stir the crude ink (which I made by crushing a black variety of berry and mixing it with water) before attaching my signature, when faintly from the valley far below came an unmistakable sound which brought me to my feet, trembling with excitement, to peer eagerly downward from my dizzy ledge. How full of meaning that sound was to me you may guess when I tell you that it was the report of a firearm! For a moment my gaze traversed the landscape beneath until it was caught and held by four figures near the base of the cliff—a human figure held at bay by three hyaenodons, those ferocious and bloodthirsty wild dogs of the Eocene. A fourth beast lay dead or dying near by.

I couldn't be sure, looking down from above as I was; but yet I trembled like a leaf in the intuitive belief that it was Lys, and my judgment served to confirm my wild desire, for whoever it was carried only a pistol, and thus had Lys been armed. The first wave of sudden joy which surged through me was short-lived in the face of the swift-following conviction that the one who fought below was already doomed. Luck and only luck it must have been which had permitted that first shot to lay low one of the savage creatures, for even such a heavy weapon as my pistol is entirely inadequate against even the lesser carnivora of Caspak. In a moment the three would charge! A futile shot would but tend more greatly to enrage the one it chanced to hit; and then the three would drag down the little human figure and tear it to pieces.

And maybe it was Lys! My heart stood still at the thought, but mind and muscle responded to the quick decision I was forced to make. There was but a single hope—a single chance—and I took it. I raised my rifle to my shoulder and took careful aim. It was a long shot, a dangerous shot, for unless one is accustomed to it, shooting from a considerable altitude is most deceptive work. There is, though, something about marksmanship which is quite beyond all scientific laws.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Upon no other theory can I explain my marksmanship of that moment. Three times my rifle spoke— three quick, short syllables of death. I did not take conscious aim; and yet at each report a beast crumpled in its tracks!

From my ledge to the base of the cliff is a matter of several thousand feet of dangerous climbing; yet I venture to say that the first ape from whose loins my line has descended never could have equaled the speed with which I literally dropped down the face of that rugged escarpment. The last two hundred feet is over a steep incline of loose rubble to the valley bottom, and I had just reached the top of this when there arose to my ears an agonized cry—"Bowen! Bowen! Quick, my love, quick!"

I had been too much occupied with the dangers of the descent to glance down toward the valley; but that cry which told me that it was indeed Lys, and that she was again in danger, brought my eyes quickly upon her in time to see a hairy, burly brute seize her and start off at a run toward the nearby wood. From rock to rock, chamoislike, I leaped downward toward the valley, in pursuit of Lys and her hideous abductor.

He was heavier than I by many pounds, and so weighted by the burden he carried that I easily overtook him; and at last he turned, snarling, to face me. It was Kho of the tribe of Tsa, the hatchetmen. He recognized me, and with a low growl he threw Lys aside and came for me. "The she is mine," he cried. "I kill! I kill!"

I had had to discard my rifle before I commenced the rapid descent of the cliff, so that now I was armed only with a hunting knife, and this I whipped from its scabbard as Kho leaped toward me. He was a mighty beast, mightily muscled, and the urge that has made males fight since the dawn of life on earth filled him with the blood-lust and the thirst to slay; but not one whit less did it fill me with the same primal passions. Two abysmal beasts sprang at each other's throats that day beneath the shadow of earth's oldest cliffs—the man of now and the man-thing of the earliest, forgotten then, imbued by the same deathless passion that has come down unchanged through all the epochs, periods and eras of time from the beginning, and which shall continue to the incalculable end—woman, the imperishable Alpha and Omega of life.

Kho closed and sought my jugular with his teeth. He seemed to forget the hatchet dangling by its aurochs-hide thong at his hip, as I forgot, for the moment, the dagger in my hand. And I doubt not but that Kho would easily have bested me in an encounter of that sort had not Lys' voice awakened within my momentarily reverted brain the skill and cunning of reasoning man. "Bowen!" she cried.

"Your knife! Your knife!" It was enough. It recalled me from the forgotten eon to which my brain had flown and left me once again a modern man battling with a clumsy, unskilled brute. No longer did my jaws snap at the hairy throat before me; but instead my knife sought and found a space between two ribs over the savage heart. Kho voiced a single horrid scream, stiffened spasmodically and sank to the earth. And Lys threw herself into my arms. All the fears and sorrows of the past were wiped away, and once again I was the happiest of men.

With some misgivings I shortly afterward cast my eyes upward toward the precarious ledge which ran before my cave, for it seemed to me quite beyond all reason to expect a dainty modern belle to essay the perils of that frightful climb. I asked her if she

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

thought she could brave the ascent, and she laughed gayly in my face.

"Watch!" she cried, and ran eagerly toward the base of the cliff. Like a squirrel she clambered swiftly aloft, so that I was forced to exert myself to keep pace with her. At first she frightened me; but presently I was aware that she was quite as safe here as was I. When we finally came to my ledge and I again held her in my arms, she recalled to my mind that for several weeks she had been living the life of a cave-girl with the tribe of hatchetmen. They had been driven from their former caves by another tribe which had slain many and carried off quite half the females, and the new cliffs to which they had flown had proven far higher and more precipitous, so that she had become, through necessity, a most practiced climber.

She told me of Kho's desire for her, since all his females had been stolen and of how her life had been a constant nightmare of terror as she sought by night and by day to elude the great brute. For a time Nobs had been all the protection she required; but one day he disappeared—nor has she seen him since. She believes that he was deliberately made away with; and so do I, for we both are sure that he never would have deserted her. With her means of protection gone, Lys was now at the mercy of the hatchet-man; nor was it many hours before he had caught her at the base of the cliff and seized her; but as he bore her triumphantly aloft toward his cave, she had managed to break loose and escape him.

"For three days he has pursued me," she said, "through this horrible world. How I have passed through in safety I cannot guess, nor how I have always managed to outdistance him; yet I have done it, until just as you discovered me. Fate was kind to us, Bowen."

I nodded my head in assent and crushed her to me. And then we talked and planned as I cooked antelope-steaks over my fire, and we came to the conclusion that there was no hope of rescue, that she and I were doomed to live and die upon Caprona. Well, it might be worse! I would rather live here always with Lys than to live elsewhere without her; and she, dear girl, says the same of me; but I am afraid of this life for her. It is a hard, fierce, dangerous life, and I shall pray always that we shall be rescued from it—for her sake.

That night the clouds broke, and the moon shone down upon our little ledge; and there, hand in hand, we turned our faces toward heaven and plighted our troth beneath the eyes of God. No human agency could have married us more sacredly than we are wed. We are man and wife, and we are content. If God wills it, we shall live out our lives here.

If He wills otherwise, then this manuscript which I shall now consign to the inscrutable forces of the sea shall fall into friendly hands. However, we are each without hope. And so we say good-bye in this, our last message to the world beyond the barrier cliffs.

(Signed) Bowen J. Tyler, Jr.

Lys La R. Tyler.

This is the tale of Bradley after he left Fort Dinosaur upon the west coast of the great lake that is in the center of the island.

Upon the fourth day of September, 1916, he set out with four companions, Sinclair,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Brady, James, and Tippet, to search along the base of the barrier cliffs for a point at which they might be scaled.

Through the heavy Caspakian air, beneath the swollen sun, the five men marched northwest from Fort Dinosaur, now waist-deep in lush, jungle grasses starred with myriad gorgeous blooms, now across open meadowland and parklike expanses and again plunging into dense forests of eucalyptus and acacia and giant arboreous ferns with feathered fronds waving gently a hundred feet above their heads.

About them upon the ground, among the trees and in the air over them moved and swung and soared the countless forms of Caspak's teeming life. Always were they menaced by some frightful thing and seldom were their rifles cool, yet even in the brief time they had dwelt upon Caprona they had become callous to danger, so that they swung along laughing and chatting like soldiers on a summer hike.

"This reminds me of South Clark Street," remarked Brady, who had once served on the traffic squad in Chicago; and as no one asked him why, he volunteered that it was "because it's no place for an Irishman."

"South Clark Street and heaven have something in common, then," suggested Sinclair. James and Tippet laughed, and then a hideous growl broke from a dense thicket ahead and diverted their attention to other matters.

"One of them behemoths of 'Oly Writ," muttered Tippet as they came to a halt and with guns ready awaited the almost inevitable charge.

"Hungry lot o' beggars, these," said Bradley; "always trying to eat everything they see."

For a moment no further sound came from the thicket. "He may be feeding now," suggested Bradley. "We'll try to go around him. Can't waste ammunition. Won't last forever. Follow me." And he set off at right angles to their former course, hoping to avert a charge. They had taken a dozen steps, perhaps, when the thicket moved to the advance of the thing within it, the leafy branches parted, and the hideous head of a gigantic bear emerged.

"Pick your trees," whispered Bradley. "Can't waste ammunition."

The men looked about them. The bear took a couple of steps forward, still growling menacingly. He was exposed to the shoulders now. Tippet took one look at the monster and bolted for the nearest tree; and then the bear charged. He charged straight for Tippet. The other men scattered for the various trees they had selected—all except Bradley. He stood watching Tippet and the bear. The man had a good start and the tree was not far away; but the speed of the enormous creature behind him was something to marvel at, yet Tippet was in a fair way to make his sanctuary when his foot caught in a tangle of roots and down he went, his rifle flying from his hand and falling several yards away. Instantly Bradley's piece was at his shoulder, there was a sharp report answered by a roar of mingled rage and pain from the carnivore. Tippet attempted to scramble to his feet.

"Lie still!" shouted Bradley. "Can't waste ammunition."

The bear halted in its tracks, wheeled toward Bradley and then back again toward Tippet. Again the former's rifle spit angrily, and the bear turned again in his direction.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Bradley shouted loudly. "Come on, you behemoth of Holy Writ!" he cried. "Come on, you duffer! Can't waste ammunition." And as he saw the bear apparently upon the verge of deciding to charge him, he encouraged the idea by backing rapidly away, knowing that an angry beast will more often charge one who moves than one who lies still.

And the bear did charge. Like a bolt of lightning he flashed down upon the Englishman. "Now run!" Bradley called to Tippet and himself turned in flight toward a nearby tree. The other men, now safely ensconced upon various branches, watched the race with breathless interest. Would Bradley make it? It seemed scarce possible. And if he didn't! James gasped at the thought. Six feet at the shoulder stood the frightful mountain of blood-mad flesh and bone and sinew that was bearing down with the speed of an express train upon the seemingly slow-moving man.

It all happened in a few seconds; but they were seconds that seemed like hours to the men who watched. They saw Tippet leap to his feet at Bradley's shouted warning. They saw him run, stooping to recover his rifle as he passed the spot where it had fallen. They saw him glance back toward Bradley, and then they saw him stop short of the tree that might have given him safety and turn back in the direction of the bear. Firing as he ran, Tippet raced after the great cave bear—the monstrous thing that should have been extinct ages before—ran for it and fired even as the beast was almost upon Bradley. The men in the trees scarcely breathed. It seemed to them such a futile thing for Tippet to do, and Tippet of all men! They had never looked upon Tippet as a coward—there seemed to be no cowards among that strangely assorted company that Fate had gathered together from the four corners of the earth—but Tippet was considered a cautious man. Overcautious, some thought him. How futile he and his little pop-gun appeared as he dashed after that living engine of destruction! But, oh, how glorious! It was some such thought as this that ran through Brady's mind, though articulated it might have been expressed otherwise, albeit more forcefully.

Just then it occurred to Brady to fire and he, too, opened upon the bear, but at the same instant the animal stumbled and fell forward, though still growling most fearsomely. Tippet never stopped running or firing until he stood within a foot of the brute, which lay almost touching Bradley and was already struggling to regain its feet. Placing the muzzle of his gun against the bear's ear, Tippet pulled the trigger. The creature sank limply to the ground and Bradley scrambled to his feet.

"Good work, Tippet," he said. "Mightily obliged to you—awful waste of ammunition, really."

And then they resumed the march and in fifteen minutes the encounter had ceased even to be a topic of conversation.

For two days they continued upon their perilous way. Already the cliffs loomed high and forbidding close ahead without sign of break to encourage hope that somewhere they might be scaled. Late in the afternoon the party crossed a small stream of warm water upon the sluggishly moving surface of which floated countless millions of tiny green eggs surrounded by a light scum of the same color, though of a darker shade. Their past experience of Caspak had taught them that they might expect to come upon a stagnant pool of warm water if they followed the stream to its source; but there they were almost certain to find some of Caspak's grotesque, manlike creatures. Already since they had

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

disembarked from the U-33 after its perilous trip through the subterranean channel beneath the barrier cliffs had brought them into the inland sea of Caspak, had they encountered what had appeared to be three distinct types of these creatures. There had been the pure apes—huge, gorillalike beasts—and those who walked, a trifle more erect and had features with just a shade more of the human cast about them. Then there were men like Ahm, whom they had captured and confined at the fort—Ahm, the club-man. “Well-known clubman,” Tyler had called him. Ahm and his people had knowledge of a speech. They had a language, in which they were unlike the race just inferior to them, and they walked much more erect and were less hairy: but it was principally the fact that they possessed a spoken language and carried a weapon that differentiated them from the others.

All of these peoples had proven belligerent in the extreme. In common with the rest of the fauna of Caprona the first law of nature as they seemed to understand it was to kill—kill—kill. And so it was that Bradley had no desire to follow up the little stream toward the pool near which were sure to be the caves of some savage tribe, but fortune played him an unkind trick, for the pool was much closer than he imagined, its southern end reaching fully a mile south of the point at which they crossed the stream, and so it was that after forcing their way through a tangle of jungle vegetation they came out upon the edge of the pool which they had wished to avoid.

Almost simultaneously there appeared south of them a party of naked men armed with clubs and hatchets. Both parties halted as they caught sight of one another. The men from the fort saw before them a hunting party evidently returning to its caves or village laden with meat. They were large men with features closely resembling those of the African Negro though their skins were white. Short hair grew upon a large portion of their limbs and bodies, which still retained a considerable trace of apish progenitors. They were, however, a distinctly higher type than the Bo-lu, or club-men.

Bradley would have been glad to have averted a meeting; but as he desired to lead his party south around the end of the pool, and as it was hemmed in by the jungle on one side and the water on the other, there seemed no escape from an encounter.

On the chance that he might avoid a clash, Bradley stepped forward with upraised hand. “We are friends,” he called in the tongue of Ahm, the Bolu, who had been held a prisoner at the fort; “permit us to pass in peace. We will not harm you.”

At this the hatchet-men set up a great jabbering with much laughter, loud and boisterous. “No,” shouted one, “you will not harm us, for we shall kill you. Come! We kill! We kill!” And with hideous shouts they charged down upon the Europeans.

“Sinclair, you may fire,” said Bradley quietly. “Pick off the leader. Can’t waste ammunition.”

The Englishman raised his piece to his shoulder and took quick aim at the breast of the yelling savage leaping toward them. Directly behind the leader came another hatchet-man, and with the report of Sinclair’s rifle both warriors lunged forward in the tall grass, pierced by the same bullet. The effect upon the rest of the band was electrical. As one man they came to a sudden halt, wheeled to the east and dashed into the jungle, where the men could hear them forcing their way in an effort to put as much distance as pos-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

sible between themselves and the authors of this new and frightful noise that killed warriors at a great distance.

Both the savages were dead when Bradley approached to examine them, and as the Europeans gathered around, other eyes were bent upon them with greater curiosity than they displayed for the victim of Sinclair's bullet. When the party again took up the march around the southern end of the pool the owner of the eyes followed them—large, round eyes, almost expressionless except for a certain cold cruelty which glinted malignly from under their pale gray irises.

All unconscious of the stalker, the men came, late in the afternoon, to a spot which seemed favorable as a campsite. A cold spring bubbled from the base of a rocky formation which overhung and partially encircled a small inclosure. At Bradley's command, the men took up the duties assigned them—gathering wood, building a cook-fire and preparing the evening meal. It was while they were thus engaged that Brady's attention was attracted by the dismal flapping of huge wings. He glanced up, expecting to see one of the great flying reptiles of a bygone age, his rifle ready in his hand. Brady was a brave man. He had groped his way up narrow tenement stairs and taken an armed maniac from a dark room without turning a hair; but now as he looked up, he went white and staggered back.

"Gawd!" he almost screamed. "What is it?"

Attracted by Brady's cry the others seized their rifles as they followed his wide-eyed, frozen gaze, nor was there one of them that was not moved by some species of terror or awe. Then Brady spoke again in an almost inaudible voice. "Holy Mother protect us—it's a banshee!"

Bradley, always cool almost to indifference in the face of danger, felt a strange, creeping sensation run over his flesh, as slowly, not a hundred feet above them, the thing flapped itself across the sky, its huge, round eyes glaring down upon them. And until it disappeared over the tops of the trees of a nearby wood the five men stood as though paralyzed, their eyes never leaving the weird shape; nor never one of them appearing to recall that he grasped a loaded rifle in his hands.

With the passing of the thing, came the reaction. Tippet sank to the ground and buried his face in his hands. "Oh, Gord," he moaned. "Tyke me awy from this orful plice." Brady, recovered from the first shock, swore loud and luridly. He called upon all the saints to witness that he was unafraid and that anybody with half an eye could have seen that the creature was nothing more than "one av thim flyin' alligators" that they all were familiar with.

"Yes," said Sinclair with fine sarcasm, "we've saw so many of them with white shrouds on 'em."

"Shut up, you fool!" growled Brady. "If you know so much, tell us what it was after bein' then."

Then he turned toward Bradley. "What was it, sor, do you think?" he asked.

Bradley shook his head. "I don't know," he said. "It looked like a winged human being clothed in a flowing white robe. Its face was more human than otherwise. That is the way it looked to me; but what it really was I can't even guess, for such a creature is as

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

far beyond my experience or knowledge as it is beyond yours. All that I am sure of is that whatever else it may have been, it was quite material—it was no ghost; rather just another of the strange forms of life which we have met here and with which we should be accustomed by this time.”

Tippet looked up. His face was still ashy. “Yer cawn’t tell me,” he cried. “Hi seen hit. Blime, Hi seen hit. Hit was ha dead man flyin’ through the hair. Didn’t Hi see ‘is heyes? Oh, Gord! Didn’t Hi see ‘em?”

“It didn’t look like any beast or reptile to me,” spoke up Sinclair. “It was lookin’ right down at me when I looked up and I saw its face plain as I see yours.

It had big round eyes that looked all cold and dead, and its cheeks were sunken in deep, and I could see its yellow teeth behind thin, tight-drawn lips—like a man who had been dead a long while, sir,” he added, turning toward Bradley.

“Yes!” James had not spoken since the apparition had passed over them, and now it was scarce speech which he uttered—rather a series of articulate gasps. “Yes—dead—a—long—while. It—means something. It—come—for some—one. For one—of us. One—of us is goin’—to die. I’m goin’ to die!” he ended in a wail.

“Come! Come!” snapped Bradley. “Won’t do. Won’t do at all. Get to work, all of you. Waste of time. Can’t waste time.”

His authoritative tones brought them all up standing, and presently each was occupied with his own duties; but each worked in silence and there was no singing and no bantering such as had marked the making of previous camps. Not until they had eaten and to each had been issued the little ration of smoking tobacco allowed after each evening meal did any sign of a relaxation of taut nerves appear. It was Brady who showed the first signs of returning good spirits. He commenced humming “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” and presently to voice the words, but he was well into his third song before anyone joined him, and even then there seemed a dismal note in even the gayest of tunes.

A huge fire blazed in the opening of their rocky shelter that the prowling carnivora might be kept at bay; and always one man stood on guard, watchfully alert against a sudden rush by some maddened beast of the jungle. Beyond the fire, yellow-green spots of flame appeared, moved restlessly about, disappeared and reappeared, accompanied by a hideous chorus of screams and growls and roars as the hungry meat-eaters hunting through the night were attracted by the light or the scent of possible prey.

But to such sights and sounds as these the five men had become callous. They sang or talked as unconcerned as they might have done in the barroom of some publichouse at home.

Sinclair was standing guard. The others were listening to Brady’s description of traffic congestion at the Rush Street bridge during the rush hour at night. The fire crackled cheerily. The owners of the yellow-green eyes raised their frightful chorus to the heavens. Conditions seemed again to have returned to normal. And then, as though the hand of Death had reached out and touched them all, the five men tensed into sudden rigidity.

Above the nocturnal diapason of the teeming jungle sounded a dismal flapping of wings and over head, through the thick night, a shadowy form passed across the dif-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

fused light of the flaring campfire. Sinclair raised his rifle and fired. An eerie wail floated down from above and the apparition, whatever it might have been, was swallowed by the darkness. For several seconds the listening men heard the sound of those dismally flapping wings lessening in the distance until they could no longer be heard.

Bradley was the first to speak. "Shouldn't have fired, Sinclair," he said; "can't waste ammunition." But there was no note of censure in his tone. It was as though he understood the nervous reaction that had compelled the other's act.

"I couldn't help it, sir," said Sinclair. "Lord, it would take an iron man to keep from shootin' at that awful thing. Do you believe in ghosts, sir?"

"No," replied Bradley. "No such things."

"I don't know about that," said Brady. "There was a woman murdered over on the prairie near

Brighton—her throat was cut from ear to ear, and—"

"Shut up," snapped Bradley.

"My granddaddy used to live down Coppington wy," said Tippet. "They were a hold ruined castle on a 'ill near by, hand at midnight they used to see pale blue lights through the windows an 'ear—"

"Will you close your hatch!" demanded Bradley. "You fools will have yourselves scared to death in a minute. Now go to sleep."

But there was little sleep in camp that night until utter exhaustion overtook the harassed men toward morning; nor was there any return of the weird creature that had set the nerves of each of them on edge.

The following forenoon the party reached the base of the barrier cliffs and for two days marched northward in an effort to discover a break in the frowning abutment that raised its rocky face almost perpendicularly above them, yet nowhere was there the slightest indication that the cliffs were scalable.

Disheartened, Bradley determined to turn back toward the fort, as he already had exceeded the time decided upon by Bowen Tyler and himself for the expedition. The cliffs for many miles had been trending in a northeasterly direction, indicating to Bradley that they were approaching the northern extremity of the island. According to the best of his calculations they had made sufficient easting during the past two days to have brought them to a point almost directly north of Fort Dinosaur and as nothing could be gained by retracing their steps along the base of the cliffs he decided to strike due south through the unexplored country between them and the fort.

That night (September 9, 1916), they made camp a short distance from the cliffs beside one of the numerous cool springs that are to be found within Caspak, oftentimes close beside the still more numerous warm and hot springs which feed the many pools. After supper the men lay smoking and chatting among themselves. Tippet was on guard. Fewer night prowlers threatened them, and the men were commenting upon the fact that the farther north they had traveled the smaller the number of all species of animals became, though it was still present in what would have seemed appalling plenitude in any other part of the world. The diminution in reptilian life was the most noticeable change in the fauna of northern Caspak. Here, however, were forms they had not met elsewhere,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

several of which were of gigantic proportions.

According to their custom all, with the exception of the man on guard, sought sleep early, nor, once disposed upon the ground for slumber, were they long in finding it. It seemed to Bradley that he had scarcely closed his eyes when he was brought to his feet, wide awake, by a piercing scream which was punctuated by the sharp report of a rifle from the direction of the fire where Tippet stood guard. As he ran toward the man, Bradley heard above him the same uncanny wail that had set every nerve on edge several nights before, and the dismal flapping of huge wings. He did not need to look up at the white-shrouded figure winging slowly away into the night to know that their grim visitor had returned.

The muscles of his arm, reacting to the sight and sound of the menacing form, carried his hand to the butt of his pistol; but after he had drawn the weapon, he immediately returned it to its holster with a shrug.

"What for?" he muttered. "Can't waste ammunition." Then he walked quickly to where Tippet lay sprawled upon his face. By this time James, Brady and Sinclair were at his heels, each with his rifle in readiness.

"Is he dead, sir?" whispered James as Bradley kneeled beside the prostrate form.

Bradley turned Tippet over on his back and pressed an ear close to the other's heart. In a moment he raised his head. "Fainted," he announced. "Get water. Hurry!" Then he loosened Tippet's shirt at the throat and when the water was brought, threw a cupful in the man's face. Slowly Tippet regained consciousness and sat up. At first he looked curiously into the faces of the men about him; then an expression of terror overspread his features. He shot a startled glance up into the black void above and then burying his face in his arms began to sob like a child.

"What's wrong, man?" demanded Bradley. "Buck up! Can't play cry-baby. Waste of energy. What happened?"

"Wot 'appened, sir!" wailed Tippet. "Oh, Gord, sir! Hit came back. Hit came for me, sir. Right hit did, sir; strite hat me, sir; hand with long w'ite 'ands it clawed for me. Oh, Gord! Hit almost caught me, sir. Hi'm has good as dead; Hi'm a marked man; that's wot Hi ham. Hit was a-goin' for to carry me horf, sir."

"Stuff and nonsense," snapped Bradley. "Did you get a good look at it?"

Tippet said that he did—a much better look than he wanted. The thing had almost clutched him, and he had looked straight into its eyes—"dead heyes in a dead face," he had described them.

"Wot was it after bein', do you think?" inquired Brady.

"Hit was Death," moaned Tippet, shuddering, and again a pall of gloom fell upon the little party.

The following day Tippet walked as one in a trance. He never spoke except in reply to a direct question, which more often than not had to be repeated before it could attract his attention. He insisted that he was already a dead man, for if the thing didn't come for him during the day he would never live through another night of agonized apprehension, waiting for the frightful end that he was positive was in store for him. "I'll see to that," he said, and they all knew that Tippet meant to take his own life before darkness

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

set in.

Bradley tried to reason with him, in his short, crisp way, but soon saw the futility of it; nor could he take the man's weapons from him without subjecting him to almost certain death from any of the numberless dangers that beset their way.

The entire party was moody and glum. There was none of the bantering that had marked their intercourse before, even in the face of blighting hardships and hideous danger. This was a new menace that threatened them, something that they couldn't explain; and so, naturally, it aroused within them superstitious fear which Tippet's attitude only tended to augment. To add further to their gloom, their way led through a dense forest, where, on account of the underbrush, it was difficult to make even a mile an hour. Constant watchfulness was required to avoid the many snakes of various degrees of repulsiveness and enormity that infested the wood; and the only ray of hope they had to cling to was that the forest would, like the majority of Caspakian forests, prove to be of no considerable extent.

Bradley was in the lead when he came suddenly upon a grotesque creature of Titanic proportions. Crouching among the trees, which here commenced to thin out slightly, Bradley saw what appeared to be an enormous dragon devouring the carcass of a mammoth. From frightful jaws to the tip of its long tail it was fully forty feet in length. Its body was covered with plates of thick skin which bore a striking resemblance to armor-plate. The creature saw Bradley almost at the same instant that he saw it and reared up on its enormous hind legs until its head towered a full twenty-five feet above the ground. From the cavernous jaws issued a hissing sound of a volume equal to the escaping steam from the safety-valves of half a dozen locomotives, and then the creature came for the man.

"Scatter!" shouted Bradley to those behind him; and all but Tippet heeded the warning. The man stood as though dazed, and when Bradley saw the other's danger, he too stopped and wheeling about sent a bullet into the massive body forcing its way through the trees toward him. The shot struck the creature in the belly where there was no protecting armor, eliciting a new note which rose in a shrill whistle and ended in a wail. It was then that Tippet appeared to come out of his trance, for with a cry of terror he turned and fled to the left. Bradley, seeing that he had as good an opportunity as the others to escape, now turned his attention to extricating himself; and as the woods seemed dense on the right, he ran in that direction, hoping that the close-set boles would prevent pursuit on the part of the great reptile. The dragon paid no further attention to him, however, for Tippet's sudden break for liberty had attracted its attention; and after Tippet it went, bowling over small trees, uprooting underbrush and leaving a wake behind it like that of a small tornado.

Bradley, the moment he had discovered the thing was pursuing Tippet, had followed it. He was afraid to fire for fear of hitting the man, and so it was that he came upon them at the very moment that the monster lunged its great weight forward upon the doomed man. The sharp, three-toed talons of the forelimbs seized poor Tippet, and Bradley saw the unfortunate fellow lifted high above the ground as the creature again reared up on its hind legs, immediately transferring Tippet's body to its gaping jaws, which closed with a sickening, crunching sound as Tippet's bones cracked beneath the great teeth.

Bradley half raised his rifle to fire again and then lowered it with a shake of his head.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Tippet was beyond succor—why waste a bullet that Caspak could never replace? If he could now escape the further notice of the monster it would be a wiser act than to throw his life away in futile revenge. He saw that the reptile was not looking in his direction, and so he slipped noiselessly behind the bole of a large tree and thence quietly faded away in the direction he believed the others to have taken. At what he considered a safe distance he halted and looked back. Half hidden by the intervening trees he still could see the huge head and the massive jaws from which protrude the limp legs of the dead man. Then, as though struck by the hammer of Thor, the creature collapsed and crumpled to the ground. Bradley's single bullet, penetrating the body through the soft skin of the belly, had slain the Titan.

A few minutes later, Bradley found the others of the party. The four returned cautiously to the spot where the creature lay and after convincing themselves that it was quite dead, came close to it. It was an arduous and gruesome job extricating Tippet's mangled remains from the powerful jaws, the men working for the most part silently.

"It was the work of the banshee all right," muttered Brady. "It warned poor Tippet, it did."

"Hit killed him, that's wot hit did, hand hit'll kill some more of us," said James, his lower lip trembling.

"If it was a ghost," interjected Sinclair, "and I don't say as it was; but if it was, why, it could take on any form it wanted to. It might have turned itself into this thing, which ain't no natural thing at all, just to get poor Tippet. If it had of been a lion or something else humanlike it wouldn't look so strange; but this here thing ain't humanlike. There ain't no such thing an' never was."

"Bullets don't kill ghosts," said Bradley, "so this couldn't have been a ghost. Furthermore, there are no such things. I've been trying to place this creature. Just succeeded. It's a tyrannosaurus. Saw picture of skeleton in magazine. There's one in New York Natural History Museum. Seems to me it said it was found in place called Hell Creek somewhere in western North America. Supposed to have lived about six million years ago."

"Hell Creek's in Montana," said Sinclair. "I used to punch cows in Wyoming, an' I've heard of Hell Creek. Do you s'pose that there thing's six million years old?" His tone was skeptical.

"No," replied Bradley; "But it would indicate that the island of Caprona has stood almost without change for more than six million years."

The conversation and Bradley's assurance that the creature was not of supernatural origin helped to raise a trifle the spirits of the men; and then came another diversion in the form of ravenous meat-eaters attracted to the spot by the uncanny sense of smell which had apprised them of the presence of flesh, killed and ready for the eating.

It was a constant battle while they dug a grave and consigned all that was mortal of John Tippet to his last, lonely resting-place. Nor would they leave then; but remained to fashion a rude headstone from a crumbling outcropping of sandstone and to gather a mass of the gorgeous flowers growing in such great profusion around them and heap the new-made grave with bright blooms. Upon the headstone Sinclair scratched in rude characters the words:

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

HERE LIES JOHN TIPPET ENGLISHMAN KILLED BY TYRANNOSAURUS 10 SEPT. A.D. 1916 R.I.P. and Bradley repeated a short prayer before they left their comrade forever.

For three days the party marched due south through forests and meadowland and great parklike areas where countless herbivorous animals grazed— deer and antelope and bos and the little ecca, the smallest species of Caspakian horse, about the size of a rabbit. There were other horses too; but all were small, the largest being not above eight hands in height. Preying continually upon the herbivora were the meat-eaters, large and small— wolves, hyaenadons, panthers, lions, tigers, and bear as well as several large and ferocious species of reptilian life.

On September twelfth the party scaled a line of sandstone cliffs which crossed their route toward the south; but they crossed them only after an encounter with the tribe that inhabited the numerous caves which pitted the face of the escarpment. That night they camped upon a rocky plateau which was sparsely wooded with jarrah, and here once again they were visited by the weird, nocturnal apparition that had already filled them with a nameless terror.

As on the night of September ninth the first warning came from the sentinel standing guard over his sleeping companions. A terror-stricken cry punctuated by the crack of a rifle brought Bradley, Sinclair and Brady to their feet in time to see James, with clubbed rifle, battling with a white-robed figure that hovered on widespread wings on a level with the Englishman's head. As they ran, shouting, forward, it was obvious to them that the weird and terrible apparition was attempting to seize James; but when it saw the others coming to his rescue, it desisted, flapping rapidly upward and away, its long, ragged wings giving forth the peculiarly dismal notes which always characterized the sound of its flying.

Bradley fired at the vanishing menacer of their peace and safety; but whether he scored a hit or not, none could tell, though, following the shot, there was wafted back to them the same piercing wail that had on other occasions frozen their marrow.

Then they turned toward James, who lay face downward upon the ground, trembling as with ague. For a time he could not even speak, but at last regained sufficient composure to tell them how the thing must have swooped silently upon him from above and behind as the first premonition of danger he had received was when the long, clawlike fingers had clutched him beneath either arm. In the melee his rifle had been discharged and he had broken away at the same instant and turned to defend himself with the butt. The rest they had seen.

From that instant James was an absolutely broken man. He maintained with shaking lips that his doom was sealed, that the thing had marked him for its own, and that he was as good as dead, nor could any amount of argument or raillery convince him to the contrary. He had seen Tippet marked and claimed and now he had been marked. Nor were his constant reiterations of this belief without effect upon the rest of the party. Even Bradley felt depressed, though for the sake of the others he managed to hide it beneath a show of confidence he was far from feeling.

And on the following day William James was killed by a saber-tooth tiger—September 13, 1916. Beneath a jarrah tree on the stony plateau on the northern edge of the Sto-lu

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

country in the land that Time forgot, he lies in a lonely grave marked by a rough headstone.

Southward from his grave marched three grim and silent men. To the best of Bradley's reckoning they were some twenty-five miles north of Fort Dinosaur, and that they might reach the fort on the following day, they plodded on until darkness overtook them. With comparative safety fifteen miles away, they made camp at last; but there was no singing now and no joking. In the bottom of his heart each prayed that they might come safely through just this night, for they knew that during the morrow they would make the final stretch, yet the nerves of each were taut with strained anticipation of what gruesome thing might flap down upon them from the black sky, marking another for its own. Who would be the next?

As was their custom, they took turns at guard, each man doing two hours and then arousing the next. Brady had gone on from eight to ten, followed by Sinclair from ten to twelve, then Bradley had been awakened. Brady would stand the last guard from two to four, as they had determined to start the moment that it became light enough to insure comparative safety upon the trail.

The snapping of a twig aroused Brady out of a dead sleep, and as he opened his eyes, he saw that it was broad daylight and that at twenty paces from him stood a huge lion. As the man sprang to his feet, his rifle ready in his hand, Sinclair awoke and took in the scene in a single swift glance. The fire was out and Bradley was nowhere in sight. For a long moment the lion and the men eyed one another. The latter had no mind to fire if the beast minded its own affairs—they were only too glad to let it go its way if it would; but the lion was of a different mind.

Suddenly the long tail snapped stiffly erect, and as though it had been attached to two trigger fingers the two rifles spoke in unison, for both men knew this signal only too well—the immediate forerunner of a deadly charge. As the brute's head had been raised, his spine had not been visible; and so they did what they had learned by long experience was best to do. Each covered a front leg, and as the tail snapped aloft, fired. With a hideous roar the mighty flesh-eater lurched forward to the ground with both front legs broken. It was an easy accomplishment in the instant before the beast charged—after, it would have been well-nigh an impossible feat. Brady stepped close in and finished him with a shot in the base of the brain lest his terrific roarings should attract his mate or others of their kind.

Then the two men turned and looked at one another. "Where is Lieutenant Bradley?" asked Sinclair. They walked to the fire. Only a few smoking embers remained. A few feet away lay Bradley's rifle. There was no evidence of a struggle. The two men circled about the camp twice and on the last lap Brady stooped and picked up an object which had lain about ten yards beyond the fire—it was Bradley's cap. Again the two looked questioningly at one another, and then, simultaneously, both pairs of eyes swung upward and searched the sky.

A moment later Brady was examining the ground about the spot where Bradley's cap had lain. It was one of those little barren, sandy stretches that they had found only upon this stony plateau. Brady's own footsteps showed as plainly as black ink upon white paper; but his was the only foot that had marred the smooth, windswept surface—there

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

was no sign that Bradley had crossed the spot upon the surface of the ground, and yet his cap lay well toward the center of it.

Breakfastless and with shaken nerves the two survivors plunged madly into the long day's march. Both were strong, courageous, resourceful men; but each had reached the limit of human nerve endurance and each felt that he would rather die than spend another night in the hideous open of that frightful land. Vivid in the mind of each was a picture of Bradley's end, for though neither had witnessed the tragedy, both could imagine almost precisely what had occurred. They did not discuss it—they did not even mention it—yet all day long the thing was uppermost in the mind of each and mingled with it a similar picture with himself as victim should they fail to make Fort Dinosaur before dark.

And so they plunged forward at reckless speed, their clothes, their hands, their faces torn by the retarding underbrush that reached forth to hinder them. Again and again they fell; but be it to their credit that the one always waited and helped the other and that into the mind of neither entered the thought or the temptation to desert his companion—they would reach the fort together if both survived, or neither would reach it.

They encountered the usual number of savage beasts and reptiles; but they met them with a courageous recklessness born of desperation, and by virtue of the very madness of the chances they took, they came through unscathed and with the minimum of delay.

Shortly after noon they reached the end of the plateau. Before them was a drop of two hundred feet to the valley beneath. To the left, in the distance, they could see the waters of the great inland sea that covers a considerable portion of the area of the crater island of Caprona and at a little lesser distance to the south of the cliffs they saw a thin spiral of smoke arising above the tree-tops.

The landscape was familiar—each recognized it immediately and knew that that smoky column marked the spot where Dinosaur had stood. Was the fort still there, or did the smoke arise from the smoldering embers of the building they had helped to fashion for the housing of their party? Who could say!

Thirty precious minutes that seemed as many hours to the impatient men were consumed in locating a precarious way from the summit to the base of the cliffs that bounded the plateau upon the south, and then once again they struck off upon level ground toward their goal. The closer they approached the fort the greater became their apprehension that all would not be well. They pictured the barracks deserted or the small company massacred and the buildings in ashes. It was almost in a frenzy of fear that they broke through the final fringe of jungle and stood at last upon the verge of the open meadow a half-mile from Fort Dinosaur.

"Lord!" ejaculated Sinclair. "They are still there!" And he fell to his knees, sobbing.

Brady trembled like a leaf as he crossed himself and gave silent thanks, for there before them stood the sturdy ramparts of Dinosaur and from inside the inclosure rose a thin spiral of smoke that marked the location of the cook-house. All was well, then, and their comrades were preparing the evening meal!

Across the clearing they raced as though they had not already covered in a single day a trackless, primeval country that might easily have required two days by fresh and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

untired men. Within hailing distance they set up such a loud shouting that presently heads appeared above the top of the parapet and soon answering shouts were rising from within Fort Dinosaur. A moment later three men issued from the inclosure and came forward to meet the survivors and listen to the hurried story of the eleven eventful days since they had set out upon their expedition to the barrier cliffs. They heard of the deaths of Tippet and James and of the disappearance of Lieutenant Bradley, and a new terror settled upon Dinosaur.

Olson, the Irish engineer, with Whitely and Wilson constituted the remnants of Dinosaur's defenders, and to Brady and Sinclair they narrated the salient events that had transpired since Bradley and his party had marched away on September 4th. They told them of the infamous act of Baron Friedrich von Schoenvorts and his German crew who had stolen the U-33, breaking their parole, and steaming away toward the subterranean opening through the barrier cliffs that carried the waters of the inland sea into the open Pacific beyond; and of the cowardly shelling of the fort.

They told of the disappearance of Miss La Rue in the night of September 11th, and of the departure of Bowen Tyler in search of her, accompanied only by his Airedale, Nobs. Thus of the original party of eleven Allies and nine Germans that had constituted the company of the U-33 when she left English waters after her capture by the crew of the English tug there were but five now to be accounted for at Fort Dinosaur. Benson, Tippet, James, and one of the Germans were known to be dead. It was assumed that Bradley, Tyler and the girl had already succumbed to some of the savage denizens of Caspak, while the fate of the Germans was equally unknown, though it might readily be believed that they had made good their escape. They had had ample time to provision the ship and the refining of the crude oil they had discovered north of the fort could have insured them an ample supply to carry them back to Germany.

When Bradley went on guard at midnight, September 14th, his thoughts were largely occupied with rejoicing that the night was almost spent without serious mishap and that the morrow would doubtless see them all safely returned to Fort Dinosaur. The hopefulness of his mood was tinged with sorrow by recollection of the two members of his party who lay back there in the savage wilderness and for whom there would never again be a homecoming.

No premonition of impending ill cast gloom over his anticipations for the coming day, for Bradley was a man who, while taking every precaution against possible danger, permitted no gloomy forebodings to weigh down his spirit. When danger threatened, he was prepared; but he was not forever courting disaster, and so it was that when about one o'clock in the morning of the fifteenth, he heard the dismal flapping of giant wings overhead, he was neither surprised nor frightened but idly prepared for an attack he had known might reasonably be expected.

The sound seemed to come from the south, and presently, low above the trees in that direction, the man made out a dim, shadowy form circling slowly about. Bradley was a brave man, yet so keen was the feeling of revulsion engendered by the sight and sound of that grim, uncanny shape that he distinctly felt the gooseflesh rise over the surface of his body, and it was with difficulty that he refrained from following an instinctive urge to fire upon the nocturnal intruder. Better, far better would it have been had he given in to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the insistent demand of his subconscious mentor; but his almost fanatical obsession to save ammunition proved now his undoing, for while his attention was riveted upon the thing circling before him and while his ears were filled with the beating of its wings, there swooped silently out of the black night behind him another weird and ghostly shape. With its huge wings partly closed for the dive and its white robe fluttering in its wake, the apparition swooped down upon the Englishman.

So great was the force of the impact when the thing struck Bradley between the shoulders that the man was half stunned. His rifle flew from his grasp; he felt clawlike talons of great strength seize him beneath his arms and sweep him off his feet; and then the thing rose swiftly with him, so swiftly that his cap was blown from his head by the rush of air as he was borne rapidly upward into the inky sky and the cry of warning to his companions was forced back into his lungs.

The creature wheeled immediately toward the east and was at once joined by its fellow, who circled them once and then fell in behind them. Bradley now realized the strategy that the pair had used to capture him and at once concluded that he was in the power of reasoning beings closely related to the human race if not actually of it.

Past experience suggested that the great wings were a part of some ingenious mechanical device, for the limitations of the human mind, which is always loath to accept aught beyond its own little experience, would not permit him to entertain the idea that the creatures might be naturally winged and at the same time of human origin. From his position Bradley could not see the wings of his captor, nor in the darkness had he been able to examine those of the second creature closely when it circled before him. He listened for the puff of a motor or some other telltale sound that would prove the correctness of his theory. However, he was rewarded with nothing more than the constant flap-flap.

Presently, far below and ahead, he saw the waters of the inland sea, and a moment later he was borne over them. Then his captor did that which proved beyond doubt to Bradley that he was in the hands of human beings who had devised an almost perfect scheme of duplicating, mechanically, the wings of a bird—the thing spoke to its companion and in a language that Bradley partially understood, since he recognized words that he had learned from the savage races of Caspak. From this he judged that they were human, and being human, he knew that they could have no natural wings—for who had ever seen a human being so adorned! Therefore their wings must be mechanical. Thus Bradley reasoned—thus most of us reason; not by what might be possible; but by what has fallen within the range of our experience.

What he heard them say was to the effect that having covered half the distance the burden would now be transferred from one to the other. Bradley wondered how the exchange was to be accomplished. He knew that those giant wings would not permit the creatures to approach one another closely enough to effect the transfer in this manner; but he was soon to discover that they had other means of doing it.

He felt the thing that carried him rise to a greater altitude, and below he glimpsed momentarily the second white-robed figure; then the creature above sounded a low call, it was answered from below, and instantly Bradley felt the clutching talons release him; gasping for breath, he hurtled downward through space.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

For a terrifying instant, pregnant with horror, Bradley fell; then something swooped for him from behind, another pair of talons clutched him beneath the arms, his downward rush was checked, within another hundred feet, and close to the surface of the sea he was again borne upward. As a hawk dives for a songbird on the wing, so this great, human bird dived for Bradley. It was a harrowing experience, but soon over, and once again the captive was being carried swiftly toward the east and what fate he could not even guess.

It was immediately following his transfer in midair that Bradley made out the shadowy form of a large island far ahead, and not long after, he realized that this must be the intended destination of his captors. Nor was he mistaken. Three quarters of an hour from the time of his seizure his captors dropped gently to earth in the strangest city that human eye had ever rested upon. Just a brief glimpse of his immediate surroundings vouchsafed Bradley before he was whisked into the interior of one of the buildings; but in that momentary glance he saw strange piles of stone and wood and mud fashioned into buildings of all conceivable sizes and shapes, sometimes piled high on top of one another, sometimes standing alone in an open court-way, but usually crowded and jammed together, so that there were no streets or alleys between them other than a few which ended almost as soon as they began. The principal doorways appeared to be in the roofs, and it was through one of these that Bradley was inducted into the dark interior of a low-ceiled room. Here he was pushed roughly into a corner where he tripped over a thick mat, and there his captors left him. He heard them moving about in the darkness for a moment, and several times he saw their large luminous eyes glowing in the dark. Finally, these disappeared and silence reigned, broken only by the breathing of the creature which indicated to the Englishman that they were sleeping somewhere in the same apartment.

It was now evident that the mat upon the floor was intended for sleeping purposes and that the rough shove that had sent him to it had been a rude invitation to repose. After taking stock of himself and finding that he still had his pistol and ammunition, some matches, a little tobacco, a canteen full of water and a razor, Bradley made himself comfortable upon the mat and was soon asleep, knowing that an attempted escape in the darkness without knowledge of his surroundings would be predoomed to failure.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, and the sight that met his eyes made him rub them again and again to assure himself that they were really open and that he was not dreaming. A broad shaft of morning light poured through the open doorway in the ceiling of the room which was about thirty feet square, or roughly square, being irregular in shape, one side curving outward, another being indented by what might have been the corner of another building jutting into it, another alcoved by three sides of an octagon, while the fourth was serpentine in contour. Two windows let in more daylight, while two doors evidently gave ingress to other rooms. The walls were partially ceiled with thin strips of wood, nicely fitted and finished, partially plastered and the rest covered with a fine, woven cloth. Figures of reptiles and beasts were painted without regard to any uniform scheme here and there upon the walls. A striking feature of the decorations consisted of several engaged columns set into the walls at no regular intervals, the capitals of each supporting a human skull the cranium of which touched the ceiling, as though the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

latter was supported by these grim reminders either of departed relatives or of some hideous tribal rite—Bradley could not but wonder which.

Yet it was none of these things that filled him with greatest wonder—no, it was the figures of the two creatures that had captured him and brought him hither. At one end of the room a stout pole about two inches in diameter ran horizontally from wall to wall some six or seven feet from the floor, its ends securely set in two of the columns. Hanging by their knees from this perch, their heads downward and their bodies wrapped in their huge wings, slept the creatures of the night before—like two great, horrid bats they hung, asleep.

As Bradley gazed upon them in wide-eyed astonishment, he saw plainly that all his intelligence, all his acquired knowledge through years of observation and experience were set at naught by the simple evidence of the fact that stood out glaringly before his eyes—the creatures' wings were not mechanical devices but as natural appendages, growing from their shoulderblades, as were their arms and legs. He saw, too, that except for their wings the pair bore a strong resemblance to human beings, though fashioned in a most grotesque mold.

As he sat gazing at them, one of the two awoke, separated his wings to release his arms that had been folded across his breast, placed his hands upon the floor, dropped his feet and stood erect. For a moment he stretched his great wings slowly, solemnly blinking his large round eyes. Then his gaze fell upon Bradley. The thin lips drew back tightly against yellow teeth in a grimace that was nothing but hideous. It could not have been termed a smile, and what emotion it registered the Englishman was at a loss to guess. No expression whatever altered the steady gaze of those large, round eyes; there was no color upon the pasty, sunken cheeks. A death's head grimaced as though a man long dead raised his parchment-covered skull from an old grave.

The creature stood about the height of an average man but appeared much taller from the fact that the joints of his long wings rose fully a foot above his hairless head. The bare arms were long and sinewy, ending in strong, bony hands with clawlike fingers—almost talonlike in their suggestiveness. The white robe was separated in front, revealing skinny legs and the further fact that the thing wore but the single garment, which was of fine, woven cloth. From crown to sole the portions of the body exposed were entirely hairless, and as he noted this, Bradley also noted for the first time the cause of much of the seeming expressionlessness of the creature's countenance—it had neither eye-brows or lashes. The ears were small and rested flat against the skull, which was noticeably round, though the face was quite flat. The creature had small feet, beautifully arched and plump, but so out of keeping with every other physical attribute it possessed as to appear ridiculous.

After eyeing Bradley for a moment the thing approached him. "Where from?" it asked.

"England," replied Bradley, as briefly.

"Where is England and what?" pursued the questioner.

"It is a country far from here," answered the Englishman.

"Are your people cor-sva-jo or cos-ata-lu?"

"I do not understand you," said Bradley; "and now suppose you answer a few ques-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tions. Who are you? What country is this? Why did you bring me here?"

Again the sepulchral grimace. "We are Wieroos—Luata is our father. Caspak is ours. This, our country, is called Oo-oh. We brought you here for (literally) Him Who Speaks for Luata to gaze upon and question. He would know from whence you came and why; but principally if you be cosata-lu."

"And if I am not cos—whatever you call the bloomin' beast—what of it?"

The Wieroo raised his wings in a very human shrug and waved his bony claws toward the human skulls supporting the ceiling. His gesture was eloquent; but he embellished it by remarking, "And possibly if you are."

"I'm hungry," snapped Bradley.

The Wieroo motioned him to one of the doors which he threw open, permitting Bradley to pass out onto another roof on a level lower than that upon which they had landed earlier in the morning. By daylight the city appeared even more remarkable than in the moonlight, though less weird and unreal. The houses of all shapes and sizes were piled about as a child might pile blocks of various forms and colors. He saw now that there were what might be called streets or alleys, but they ran in baffling turns and twists, nor ever reached a destination, always ending in a dead wall where some Wieroo had built a house across them.

Upon each house was a slender column supporting a human skull. Sometimes the columns were at one corner of the roof, sometimes at another, or again they rose from the center or near the center, and the columns were of varying heights, from that of a man to those which rose twenty feet above their roofs. The skulls were, as a rule, painted—blue or white, or in combinations of both colors. The most effective were painted blue with the teeth white and the eye-sockets rimmed with white.

There were other skulls—thousands of them—tens, hundreds of thousands. They rimmed the eaves of every house, they were set in the plaster of the outer walls and at no great distance from where Bradley stood rose a round tower built entirely of human skulls. And the city extended in every direction as far as the Englishman could see.

All about him Wieroos were moving across the roofs or winging through the air. The sad sound of their flapping wings rose and fell like a solemn dirge. Most of them were appareled all in white, like his captors; but others had markings of red or blue or yellow slashed across the front of their robes.

His guide pointed toward a doorway in an alley below them. "Go there and eat," he commanded, "and then come back. You cannot escape. If any question you, say that you belong to Fosh-bal-soj. There is the way." And this time he pointed to the top of a ladder which protruded above the eaves of the roof near-by. Then he turned and reentered the house.

Bradley looked about him. No, he could not escape—that seemed evident. The city appeared interminable, and beyond the city, if not a savage wilderness filled with wild beasts, there was the broad inland sea infested with horrid monsters. No wonder his captor felt safe in turning him loose in Oo-oh—he wondered if that was the name of the country or the city and if there were other cities like this upon the island.

Slowly he descended the ladder to the seemingly deserted alley which was paved

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

with what appeared to be large, round cobblestones. He looked again at the smooth, worn pavement, and a rueful grin crossed his features—the alley was paved with skulls. “The City of Human Skulls,” mused Bradley. “They must have been collectin’ ‘em since Adam,” he thought, and then he crossed and entered the building through the doorway that had been pointed out to him.

Inside he found a large room in which were many Wieroos seated before pedestals the tops of which were hollowed out so that they resembled the ordinary bird drinking- and bathing-fonts so commonly seen on suburban lawns. A seat protruded from each of the four sides of the pedestals—just a flat board with a support running from its outer end diagonally to the base of the pedestal.

As Bradley entered, some of the Wieroos espied him, and a dismal wail arose. Whether it was a greeting or a threat, Bradley did not know. Suddenly from a dark alcove another Wieroo rushed out toward him. “Who are you?” he cried. “What do you want?”

“Fosh-bal-soj sent me here to eat,” replied Bradley.

“Do you belong to Fosh-bal-soj?” asked the other.

“That appears to be what he thinks,” answered the Englishman.

“Are you cos-ata-lu?” demanded the Wieroo.

“Give me something to eat or I’ll be all of that,” replied Bradley.

The Wieroo looked puzzled. “Sit here, jaal-lu,” he snapped, and Bradley sat down unconscious of the fact that he had been insulted by being called a hyena-man, an appellation of contempt in Caspak.

The Wieroo had seated him at a pedestal by himself, and as he sat waiting for what was next to transpire, he looked about him at the Wieroo in his immediate vicinity. He saw that in each font was a quantity of food, and that each Wieroo was armed with a wooden skewer, sharpened at one end; with which they carried solid portions of food to their mouths. At the other end of the skewer was fastened a small clamshell. This was used to scoop up the smaller and softer portions of the repast into which all four of the occupants of each table dipped impartially. The Wieroo leaned far over their food, scooping it up rapidly and with much noise, and so great was their haste that a part of each mouthful always fell back into the common dish; and when they choked, by reason of the rapidity with which they attempted to bolt their food, they often lost it all. Bradley was glad that he had a pedestal all to himself.

Soon the keeper of the place returned with a wooden bowl filled with food. This he dumped into Bradley’s “trough,” as he already thought of it. The Englishman was glad that he could not see into the dark alcove or know what were all the ingredients that constituted the mess before him, for he was very hungry.

After the first mouthful he cared even less to investigate the antecedents of the dish, for he found it peculiarly palatable. It seemed to consist of a combination of meat, fruits, vegetables, small fish and other undistinguishable articles of food all seasoned to produce a gastronomic effect that was at once baffling and delicious.

When he had finished, his trough was empty, and then he commenced to wonder who was to settle for his meal. As he waited for the proprietor to return, he fell to exam-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ining the dish from which he had eaten and the pedestal upon which it rested.

The font was of stone worn smooth by long-continued use, the four outer edges hollowed and polished by the contact of the countless Wieroo bodies that had leaned against them for how long a period of time Bradley could not even guess. Everything about the place carried the impression of hoary age. The carved pedestals were black with use, the wooden seats were worn hollow, the floor of stone slabs was polished by the contact of possibly millions of naked feet and worn away in the aisles between the pedestals so that the latter rested upon little mounds of stone several inches above the general level of the floor.

Finally, seeing that no one came to collect, Bradley arose and started for the doorway. He had covered half the distance when he heard the voice of mine host calling to him: "Come back, jaal-lu," screamed the Wieroo; and Bradley did as he was bid. As he approached the creature which stood now behind a large, flat-topped pedestal beside the alcove, he saw lying upon the smooth surface something that almost elicited a gasp of astonishment from him—a simple, common thing it was, or would have been almost anywhere in the world but Caspak—a square bit of paper!

And on it, in a fine hand, written compactly, were many strange hieroglyphics! These remarkable creatures, then, had a written as well as a spoken language and besides the art of weaving cloth possessed that of paper-making. Could it be that such grotesque beings represented the high culture of the human race within the boundaries of Caspak? Had natural selection produced during the countless ages of Caspakian life a winged monstrosity that represented the earthly pinnacle of man's evolution?

Bradley had noted something of the obvious indications of a gradual evolution from ape to spearman as exemplified by the several overlapping races of Alalus, club-men and hatchet-men that formed the connecting links between the two extremes with which he, had come in contact. He had heard of the Krolus and the Galus—reputed to be still higher in the plane of evolution—and now he had indisputable evidence of a race possessing refinements of civilization eons in advance of the spear-men. The conjectures awakened by even a momentary consideration of the possibilities involved became at once as wildly bizarre as the insane imagings of a drug addict.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, the Wieroo held out a pen of bone fixed to a wooden holder and at the same time made a sign that Bradley was to write upon the paper. It was difficult to judge from the expressionless features of the Wieroo what was passing in the creature's mind, but Bradley could not but feel that the thing cast a supercilious glance upon him as much as to say, "Of course you do not know how to write, you poor, low creature; but you can make your mark."

Bradley seized the pen and in a clear, bold hand wrote: "John Bradley, England." The Wieroo showed evidences of consternation as it seized the piece of paper and examined the writing with every mark of incredulity and surprise. Of course it could make nothing of the strange characters; but it evidently accepted them as proof that Bradley possessed knowledge of a written language of his own, for following the Englishman's entry it made a few characters of its own.

"You will come here again just before Lua hides his face behind the great cliff," an-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

nounced the creature, "unless before that you are summoned by Him Who Speaks for Luata, in which case you will not have to eat any more."

"Reassuring cuss," thought Bradley as he turned and left the building.

Outside were several Wieroos that had been eating at the pedestals within. They immediately surrounded him, asking all sorts of questions, plucking at his garments, his ammunition-belt and his pistol. Their demeanor was entirely different from what it had been within the eating-place and Bradley was to learn that a house of food was sanctuary for him, since the stern laws of the Wieroos forbade altercations within such walls. Now they were rough and threatening, as with wings half spread they hovered about him in menacing attitudes, barring his way to the ladder leading to the roof from whence he had descended; but the Englishman was not one to brook interference for long. He attempted at first to push his way past them, and then when one seized his arm and jerked him roughly back, Bradley swung upon the creature and with a heavy blow to the jaw felled it.

Instantly pandemonium reigned. Loud wails arose, great wings opened and closed with a loud, beating noise and many clawlike hands reached forth to clutch him. Bradley struck to right and left. He dared not use his pistol for fear that once they discovered its power he would be overcome by weight of numbers and relieved of possession of what he considered his trump card, to be reserved until the last moment that it might be used to aid in his escape, for already the Englishman was planning, though almost hopelessly, such an attempt.

A few blows convinced Bradley that the Wieroos were arrant cowards and that they bore no weapons, for after two or three had fallen beneath his fists the others formed a circle about him, but at a safe distance and contented themselves with threatening and blustering, while those whom he had felled lay upon the pavement without trying to arise, the while they moaned and wailed in lugubrious chorus.

Again Bradley strode toward the ladder, and this time the circle parted before him; but no sooner had he ascended a few rungs than he was seized by one foot and an effort made to drag him down. With a quick backward glance the Englishman, clinging firmly to the ladder with both hands, drew up his free foot and with all the strength of a powerful leg, planted a heavy shoe squarely in the flat face of the Wieroo that held him. Shrieking horribly, the creature clapped both hands to its face and sank to the ground while Bradley clambered quickly the remaining distance to the roof, though no sooner did he reach the top of the ladder than a great flapping of wings beneath him warned him that the Wieroos were rising after him. A moment later they swarmed about his head as he ran for the apartment in which he had spent the early hours of the morning after his arrival.

It was but a short distance from the top of the ladder to the doorway, and Bradley had almost reached his goal when the door flew open and Fosh-bal-soj stepped out. Immediately the pursuing Wieroos demanded punishment of the jaal-lu who had so grievously maltreated them. Fosh-balsoj listened to their complaints and then with a sudden sweep of his right hand seized Bradley by the scruff of the neck and hurled him sprawling through the doorway upon the floor of the chamber.

So sudden was the assault and so surprising the strength of the Wieroo that the En-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

glishman was taken completely off his guard. When he arose, the door was closed, and Fosh-bal-soj was standing over him, his hideous face contorted into an expression of rage and hatred.

“Hyena, snake, lizard!” he screamed. “You would dare lay your low, vile, profaning hands upon even the lowliest of the Wieroos—the sacred chosen of Luata!”

Bradley was mad, and so he spoke in a very low, calm voice while a half-smile played across his lips but his cold, gray eyes were unsmiling.

“What you did to me just now,” he said, “—I am going to kill you for that,” and even as he spoke, he launched himself at the throat of Fosh-bal-soj. The other Wieroo that had been asleep when Bradley left the chamber had departed, and the two were alone. Fosh-bal-soj displayed little of the cowardice of those that had attacked Bradley in the alleyway, but that may have been because he had so slight opportunity, for Bradley had him by the throat before he could utter a cry and with his right hand struck him heavily and repeatedly upon his face and over his heart—ugly, smashing, short-arm jabs of the sort that take the fight out of a man in quick time.

But Fosh-bal-soj was of no mind to die passively. He clawed and struck at Bradley while with his great wings he attempted to shield himself from the merciless rain of blows, at the same time searching for a hold upon his antagonist’s throat. Presently he succeeded in tripping the Englishman, and together the two fell heavily to the floor, Bradley underneath, and at the same instant the Wieroo fastened his long talons about the other’s windpipe.

Fosh-bal-soj was possessed of enormous strength and he was fighting for his life. The Englishman soon realized that the battle was going against him. Already his lungs were pounding painfully for air as he reached for his pistol. It was with difficulty that he drew it from its holster, and even then, with death staring him in the face, he thought of his precious ammunition. “Can’t waste it,” he thought; and slipping his fingers to the barrel he raised the weapon and struck Fosh-bal-soj a terrific blow between the eyes. Instantly the clawlike fingers released their hold, and the creature sank limply to the floor beside Bradley, who lay for several minutes gasping painfully in an effort to regain his breath.

When he was able, he rose, and leaned close over the Wieroo, lying silent and motionless, his wings dropping limply and his great, round eyes staring blankly toward the ceiling. A brief examination convinced Bradley that the thing was dead, and with the conviction came an overwhelming sense of the dangers which must now confront him; but how was he to escape?

His first thought was to find some means for concealing the evidence of his deed and then to make a bold effort to escape. Stepping to the second door he pushed it gently open and peered in upon what seemed to be a store room. In it was a litter of cloth such as the Wieroos’ robes were fashioned from, a number of chests painted blue and white, with white hieroglyphics painted in bold strokes upon the blue and blue hieroglyphics upon the white. In one corner was a pile of human skulls reaching almost to the ceiling and in another a stack of dried Wieroo wings. The chamber was as irregularly shaped as the other and had but a single window and a second door at the further end, but was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

without the exit through the roof and, most important of all, there was no creature of any sort in it.

As quickly as possible Bradley dragged the dead Wieroo through the doorway and closed the door; then he looked about for a place to conceal the corpse. One of the chests was large enough to hold the body if the knees were bent well up, and with this idea in view Bradley approached the chest to open it. The lid was made in two pieces, each being hinged at an opposite end of the chest and joining nicely where they met in the center of the chest, making a snug, well-fitting joint. There was no lock. Bradley raised one half the cover and looked in. With a smothered "By Jove!" he bent closer to examine the contents—the chest was about half filled with an assortment of golden trinkets. There were what appeared to be bracelets, anklets and brooches of virgin gold.

Realizing that there was no room in the chest for the body of the Wieroo, Bradley turned to seek another means of concealing the evidence of his crime. There was a space between the chests and the wall, and into this he forced the corpse, piling the discarded robes upon it until it was entirely hidden from sight; but now how was he to make good his escape in the bright glare of that early Spring day?

He walked to the door at the far end of the apartment and cautiously opened it an inch. Before him and about two feet away was the blank wall of another building. Bradley opened the door a little farther and looked in both directions. There was no one in sight to the left over a considerable expanse of roof-top, and to the right another building shut off his line of vision at about twenty feet. Slipping out, he turned to the right and in a few steps found a narrow passageway between two buildings. Turning into this he passed about half its length when he saw a Wieroo appear at the opposite end and halt. The creature was not looking down the passageway; but at any moment it might turn its eyes toward him, when he would be immediately discovered.

To Bradley's left was a triangular niche in the wall of one of the houses and into this he dodged, thus concealing himself from the sight of the Wieroo. Beside him was a door painted a vivid yellow and constructed after the same fashion as the other Wieroo doors he had seen, being made up of countless narrow strips of wood from four to six inches in length laid on in patches of about the same width, the strips in adjacent patches never running in the same direction. The result bore some resemblance to a crazy patchwork quilt, which was heightened when, as in one of the doors he had seen, contiguous patches were painted different colors. The strips appeared to have been bound together and to the underlying framework of the door with gut or fiber and also glued, after which a thick coating of paint had been applied. One edge of the door was formed of a straight, round pole about two inches in diameter that protruded at top and bottom, the projections setting in round holes in both lintel and sill forming the axis upon which the door swung. An eccentric disk upon the inside face of the door engaged a slot in the frame when it was desired to secure the door against intruders.

As Bradley stood flattened against the wall waiting for the Wieroo to move on, he heard the creature's wings brushing against the sides of the buildings as it made its way down the narrow passage in his direction. As the yellow door offered the only means of escape without detection, the Englishman decided to risk whatever might lie beyond it, and so, boldly pushing it in, he crossed the threshold and entered a small apartment.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

As he did so, he heard a muffled ejaculation of surprise, and turning his eyes in the direction from whence the sound had come, he beheld a wide-eyed girl standing flat-tened against the opposite wall, an expression of incredulity upon her face. At a glance he saw that she was of no race of humans that he had come in contact with since his arrival upon Caprona—there was no trace about her form or features of any relationship to those low orders of men, nor was she appareled as they—or, rather, she did not entirely lack apparel as did most of them.

A soft hide fell from her left shoulder to just below her left hip on one side and almost to her right knee on the other, a loose girdle was about her waist, and golden ornaments such as he had seen in the blue-and-white chest encircled her arms and legs, while a golden fillet with a triangular diadem bound her heavy hair above her brows. Her skin was white as from long confinement within doors; but it was clear and fine. Her figure, but partially concealed by the soft deerskin, was all curves of symmetry and youthful grace, while her features might easily have been the envy of the most feted of Continental beauties.

If the girl was surprised by the sudden appearance of Bradley, the latter was absolutely astounded to discover so wondrous a creature among the hideous inhabitants of the City of Human Skulls. For a moment the two looked at one another in unconcealed consternation, and then Bradley spoke, using to the best of his poor ability, the common tongue of Caspak.

“Who are you,” he asked, “and from where do you come? Do not tell me that you are a Wieroo.”

“No,” she replied, “I am no Wieroo.” And she shuddered slightly as she pronounced the word. “I am a Galu; but who and what are you? I am sure that you are no Galu, from your garments; but you are like the Galus in other respects. I know that you are not of this frightful city, for I have been here for almost ten moons, and never have I seen a male Galu brought hither before, nor are there such as you and I, other than prisoners in the land of Oooh, and these are all females. Are you a prisoner, then?”

He told her briefly who and what he was, though he doubted if she understood, and from her he learned that she had been a prisoner there for many months; but for what purpose he did not then learn, as in the midst of their conversation the yellow door swung open and a Wieroo with a robe slashed with yellow entered.

At sight of Bradley the creature became furious. “Whence came this reptile?” it demanded of the girl. “How long has it been here with you?”

“It came through the doorway just ahead of you,” Bradley answered for the girl.

The Wieroo looked relieved. “It is well for the girl that this is so,” it said, “for now only you will have to die.” And stepping to the door the creature raised its voice in one of those uncanny, depressing wails.

The Englishman looked toward the girl. “Shall I kill it?” he asked, half drawing his pistol. “What is best to do?—I do not wish to endanger you.”

The Wieroo backed toward the door. “Defiler!” it screamed. “You dare to threaten one of the sacred chosen of Luata!”

“Do not kill him,” cried the girl, “for then there could be no hope for you. That you

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

are here, alive, shows that they may not intend to kill you at all, and so there is a chance for you if you do not anger them; but touch him in violence and your bleached skull will top the loftiest pedestal of Oo-oh."

"And what of you?" asked Bradley.

"I am already doomed," replied the girl; "I am cosata-lo."

"Cos-ata-lo! cos-ata-lu!" What did these phrases mean that they were so oft repeated by the denizens of Oo-oh? Lu and lo, Bradley knew to mean man and woman; ata; was employed variously to indicate life, eggs, young, reproduction and kindred subject; cos was a negative; but in combination they were meaningless to the European.

"Do you mean they will kill you?" asked Bradley.

"I but wish that they would," replied the girl. "My fate is to be worse than death—in just a few nights more, with the coming of the new moon."

"Poor she-snake!" snapped the Wieroo. "You are to become sacred above all other shes. He Who Speaks for Luata has chosen you for himself. Today you go to his temple—the Wieroo used a phrase meaning literally High Place—where you will receive the sacred commands."

The girl shuddered and cast a sorrowful glance toward Bradley. "Ah," she sighed, "if I could but see my beloved country once again!"

The man stepped suddenly close to her side before the Wieroo could interpose and in a low voice asked her if there was no way by which he might encompass her escape. She shook her head sorrowfully. "Even if we escaped the city," she replied, "there is the big water between the island of Oo-oh and the Galu shore."

"And what is beyond the city, if we could leave it?" pursued Bradley.

"I may only guess from what I have heard since I was brought here," she answered; "but by reports and chance remarks I take it to be a beautiful land in which there are but few wild beasts and no men, for only the Wieroos live upon this island and they dwell always in cities of which there are three, this being the largest. The others are at the far end of the island, which is about three marches from end to end and at its widest point about one march."

From his own experience and from what the natives on the mainland had told him, Bradley knew that ten miles was a good day's march in Caspak, owing to the fact that at most points it was a trackless wilderness and at all times travelers were beset by hideous beasts and reptiles that greatly impeded rapid progress.

The two had spoken rapidly but were now interrupted by the advent through the opening in the roof of several Wieroos who had come in answer to the alarm it of the yellow slashing had uttered.

"This jaal-lu," cried the offended one, "has threatened me. Take its hatchet from it and make it fast where it can do no harm until He Who Speaks for Luata has said what shall be done with it. It is one of those strange creatures that Fosh-bal-soj discovered first above the Band-lu country and followed back toward the beginning. He Who Speaks for Luata sent Foshbal-soj to fetch him one of the creatures, and here it is. It is hoped that it may be from another world and hold the secret of the cosata-lus."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The Wieroos approached boldly to take Bradley's "hatchet" from him, their leader having indicated the pistol hanging in its holster at the Englishman's hip, but the first one went reeling backward against his fellows from the blow to the chin which Bradley followed up with a rush and the intention to clean up the room in record time; but he had reckoned without the opening in the roof. Two were down and a great wailing and moaning was arising when reinforcements appeared from above. Bradley did not see them; but the girl did, and though she cried out a warning, it came too late for him to avoid a large Wieroo who dived headforemost for him, striking him between the shoulders and bearing him to the floor. Instantly a dozen more were piling on top of him. His pistol was wrenched from its holster and he was securely pinioned down by the weight of numbers.

At a word from the Wieroo of the yellow slashing who evidently was a person of authority, one left and presently returned with fiber ropes with which Bradley was tightly bound.

"Now bear him to the Blue Place of Seven Skulls," directed the chief Wieroo, "and one take the word of all that has passed to Him Who Speaks for Luata."

Each of the creatures raised a hand, the back against its face, as though in salute. One seized Bradley and carried him through the yellow doorway to the roof from whence it rose upon its wide-spread wings and flapped off across the roof-tops of Oooh with its heavy burden clutched in its long talons.

Below him Bradley could see the city stretching away to a distance on every hand. It was not as large as he had imagined, though he judged that it was at least three miles square. The houses were piled in indescribable heaps, sometimes to a height of a hundred feet. The streets and alleys were short and crooked and there were many areas where buildings had been wedged in so closely that no light could possibly reach the lowest tiers, the entire surface of the ground being packed solidly with them.

The colors were varied and startling, the architecture amazing. Many roofs were cup or saucer-shaped with a small hole in the center of each, as though they had been constructed to catch rainwater and conduct it to a reservoir beneath; but nearly all the others had the large opening in the top that Bradley had seen used by these flying men in lieu of doorways. At all levels were the myriad poles surmounted by grinning skulls; but the two most prominent features of the city were the round tower of human skulls that Bradley had noted earlier in the day and another and much larger edifice near the center of the city. As they approached it, Bradley saw that it was a huge building rising a hundred feet in height from the ground and that it stood alone in the center of what might have been called a plaza in some other part of the world. Its various parts, however, were set together with the same strange irregularity that marked the architecture of the city as a whole; and it was capped by an enormous saucer-shaped roof which projected far beyond the eaves, having the appearance of a colossal Chinese coolie hat, inverted.

The Wieroo bearing Bradley passed over one corner of the open space about the large building, revealing to the Englishman grass and trees and running water beneath. They passed the building and about five hundred yards beyond the creature alighted on the roof of a square, blue building surmounted by seven poles bearing seven skulls. This then, thought Bradley, is the Blue Place of Seven Skulls.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Over the opening in the roof was a grated covering, and this the Wieroo removed. The thing then tied a piece of fiber rope to one of Bradley's ankles and rolled him over the edge of the opening. All was dark below and for an instant the Englishman came as near to experiencing real terror as he had ever come in his life before. As he rolled off into the black abyss he felt the rope tighten about his ankle and an instant later he was stopped with a sudden jerk to swing pendulumlike, head downward. Then the creature lowered away until Bradley's head came in sudden and painful contact with the floor below, after which the Wieroo let loose of the rope entirely and the Englishman's body crashed to the wooden planking. He felt the free end of the rope dropped upon him and heard the grating being slid into place above him.

Half-stunned, Bradley lay for a minute as he had fallen and then slowly and painfully wriggled into a less uncomfortable position. He could see nothing of his surroundings in the gloom about him until after a few minutes his eyes became accustomed to the dark interior when he rolled them from side to side in survey of his prison.

He discovered himself to be in a bare room which was windowless, nor could he see any other opening than that through which he had been lowered. In one corner was a huddled mass that might have been almost anything from a bundle of rags to a dead body.

Almost immediately after he had taken his bearings Bradley commenced working with his bonds. He was a man of powerful physique, and as from the first he had been imbued with a belief that the fiber ropes were too weak to hold him, he worked on with a firm conviction that sooner or later they would part to his strainings. After a matter of five minutes he was positive that the strands about his wrists were beginning to give; but he was compelled to rest then from exhaustion.

As he lay, his eyes rested upon the bundle in the corner, and presently he could have sworn that the thing moved. With eyes straining through the gloom the man lay watching the grim and sinister thing in the corner. Perhaps his overwrought nerves were playing a sorry joke upon him. He thought of this and also that his condition of utter helplessness might still further have stimulated his imagination. He closed his eyes and sought to relax his muscles and his nerves; but when he looked again, he knew that he had not been mistaken—the thing had moved; now it lay in a slightly altered form and farther from the wall. It was nearer him.

With renewed strength Bradley strained at his bonds, his fascinated gaze still glued upon the shapeless bundle. No longer was there any doubt that it moved—he saw it rise in the center several inches and then creep closer to him. It sank and arose again—a headless, hideous, monstrous thing of menace. Its very silence rendered it the more terrible.

Bradley was a brave man; ordinarily his nerves were of steel; but to be at the mercy of some unknown and nameless horror, to be unable to defend himself—it was these things that almost unstrung him, for at best he was only human. To stand in the open, even with the odds all against him; to be able to use his fists, to put up some sort of defense, to inflict punishment upon his adversary—then he could face death with a smile. It was not death that he feared now—it was that horror of the unknown that is part of the fiber of every son of woman.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Closer and closer came the shapeless mass. Bradley lay motionless and listened. What was that he heard! Breathing? He could not be mistaken—and then from out of the bundle of rags issued a hollow groan. Bradley felt his hair rise upon his head. He struggled with the slowly parting strands that held him. The thing beside him rose up higher than before and the Englishman could have sworn that he saw a single eye peering at him from among the tumbled cloth. For a moment the bundle remained motionless—only the sound of breathing issued from it, then there broke from it a maniacal laugh.

Cold sweat stood upon Bradley's brow as he tugged for liberation. He saw the rags rise higher and higher above him until at last they tumbled upon the floor from the body of a naked man—a thin, a bony, a hideous caricature of man, that mouthed and mumbled and, wobbling upon its weak and shaking legs, crumpled to the floor again, still laughing—laughing horribly.

It crawled toward Bradley. "Food! Food!" it screamed. "There is a way out! There is a way out!"

Dragging itself to his side the creature slumped upon the Englishman's breast. "Food!" it shrilled as with its bony fingers and its teeth, it sought the man's bare throat.

"Food! There is a way out!" Bradley felt teeth upon his jugular. He turned and twisted, shaking himself free for an instant; but once more with hideous persistence the thing fastened itself upon him. The weak jaws were unable to send the dull teeth through the victim's flesh; but Bradley felt it pawing, pawing, pawing, like a monstrous rat, seeking his life's blood.

The skinny arms now embraced his neck, holding the teeth to his throat against all his efforts to dislodge the thing. Weak as it was it had strength enough for this in its mad efforts to eat. Mumbling as it worked, it repeated again and again, "Food! Food! There is a way out!" until Bradley thought those two expressions alone would drive him mad.

And all but mad he was as with a final effort backed by almost maniacal strength he tore his wrists from the confining bonds and grasping the repulsive thing upon his breast hurled it halfway across the room. Panting like a spent hound Bradley worked at the thongs about his ankles while the maniac lay quivering and mumbling where it had fallen. Presently the Englishman leaped to his feet—freer than he had ever before felt in all his life, though he was still hopelessly a prisoner in the Blue Place of Seven Skulls.

With his back against the wall for support, so weak the reaction left him, Bradley stood watching the creature upon the floor. He saw it move and slowly raise itself to its hands and knees, where it swayed to and fro as its eyes roved about in search of him; and when at last they found him, there broke from the drawn lips the mumbled words: "Food! Food! There is a way out!" The pitiful supplication in the tones touched the Englishman's heart. He knew that this could be no Wieroo, but possibly once a man like himself who had been cast into this pit of solitary confinement with this hideous result that might in time be his fate, also.

And then, too, there was the suggestion of hope held out by the constant reiteration of the phrase, "There is a way out." Was there a way out? What did this poor thing know?

"Who are you and how long have you been here?" Bradley suddenly demanded.

For a moment the man upon the floor made no response, then mumblingly came the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

words: "Food! Food!"

"Stop!" commanded the Englishman—the injunction might have been barked from the muzzle of a pistol. It brought the man to a sitting posture, his hands off the ground. He stopped swaying to and fro and appeared to be startled into an attempt to master his faculties of concentration and thought.

Bradley repeated his questions sharply.

"I am An-Tak, the Galu," replied the man. "Luata alone knows how long I have been here—maybe ten moons, maybe ten moons three times"—it was the Caspakian equivalent of thirty. "I was young and strong when they brought me here. Now I am old and very weak. I am cos-ata-lu—that is why they have not killed me. If I tell them the secret of becoming cosata-lu they will take me out; but how can I tell them that which Luata alone knows?"

"What is cos-ata-lu?" demanded Bradley.

"Food! Food! There is a way out!" mumbled the Galu.

Bradley strode across the floor, seized the man by his shoulders and shook him.

"Tell me," he cried, "what is cos-ata-lu?"

"Food!" whimpered An-Tak.

Bradley bethought himself. His haversack had not been taken from him. In it besides his razor and knife were odds and ends of equipment and a small quantity of dried meat. He tossed a small strip of the latter to the starving Galu. An-Tak seized upon it and devoured it ravenously. It instilled new life in the man.

"What is cos-ata-lu?" insisted Bradley again.

An-Tak tried to explain. His narrative was often broken by lapses of concentration during which he reverted to his plaintive mumbling for food and recurrence to the statement that there was a way out; but by firmness and patience the Englishman drew out piece-meal a more or less lucid exposition of the remarkable scheme of evolution that rules in Caspak. In it he found explanations of the hitherto inexplicable. He discovered why he had seen no babes or children among the Caspakian tribes with which he had come in contact; why each more northerly tribe evinced a higher state of development than those south of them; why each tribe included individuals ranging in physical and mental characteristics from the highest of the next lower race to the lowest of the next higher, and why the women of each tribe immersed themselves morning for an hour or more in the warm pools near which the habitations of their people always were located; and, too, he discovered why those pools were almost immune from the attacks of carnivorous animals and reptiles.

He learned that all but those who were cos-atalu came up cor-sva-jo, or from the beginning. The egg from which they first developed into tadpole form was deposited, with millions of others, in one of the warm pools and with it a poisonous serum that the carnivora instinctively shunned. Down the warm stream from the pool floated the countless billions of eggs and tadpoles, developing as they drifted slowly toward the sea. Some became tadpoles in the pool, some in the sluggish stream and some not until they reached the great inland sea. In the next stage they became fishes or reptiles, An-Tak was not positive which, and in this form, always developing, they swam far to the south,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

where, amid the rank and teeming jungles, some of them evolved into amphibians. Always there were those whose development stopped at the first stage, others whose development ceased when they became reptiles, while by far the greater proportion formed the food supply of the ravenous creatures of the deep.

Few indeed were those that eventually developed into baboons and then apes, which was considered by Caspakians the real beginning of evolution. From the egg, then, the individual developed slowly into a higher form, just as the frog's egg develops through various stages from a fish with gills to a frog with lungs. With that thought in mind Bradley discovered that it was not difficult to believe in the possibility of such a scheme—there was nothing new in it.

From the ape the individual, if it survived, slowly developed into the lowest order of man—the Alu—and then by degrees to Bo-lu, Sto-lu, Band-lu, Krolu and finally Galu. And in each stage countless millions of other eggs were deposited in the warm pools of the various races and floated down to the great sea to go through a similar process of evolution outside the womb as develops our own young within; but in Caspak the scheme is much more inclusive, for it combines not only individual development but the evolution of species and genera. If an egg survives it goes through all the stages of development that man has passed through during the unthinkable eons since life first moved upon the earth's face.

The final stage—that which the Galus have almost attained and for which all hope—is cos-atalu, which literally, means no-egg-man, or one who is born directly as are the young of the outer world of mammals. Some of the Galus produce cos-ata-lu and cosatalo both; the Weiroos only cos-ata-lu—in other words all Wierooos are born male, and so they prey upon the Galus for their women and sometimes capture and torture the Galu men who are cos-ata-lu in an endeavor to learn the secret which they believe will give them unlimited power over all other denizens of Caspak.

No Wierooos come up from the beginning—all are born of the Wieroo fathers and Galu mothers who are cos-ata-lo, and there are very few of the latter owing to the long and precarious stages of development. Seven generations of the same ancestor must come up from the beginning before a cos-ata-lu child may be born; and when one considers the frightful dangers that surround the vital spark from the moment it leaves the warm pool where it has been deposited to float down to the sea amid the voracious creatures that swarm the surface and the deeps and the almost equally unthinkable trials of its effort to survive after it once becomes a land animal and starts northward through the horrors of the Caspakian jungles and forests, it is plainly a wonder that even a single babe has ever been born to a Galu woman.

Seven cycles it requires before the seventh Galu can complete the seventh danger-infested circle since its first Galu ancestor achieved the state of Galu. For ages before, the ancestors of this first Galu may have developed from a Band-lu or Bo-lu egg without ever once completing the whole circle—that is from a Galu egg, back to a fully developed Galu.

Bradley's head was whirling before he even commenced to grasp the complexities of Caspakian evolution; but as the truth slowly filtered into his understanding—as gradually it became possible for him to visualize the scheme, it appeared simpler. In fact, it

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seemed even less difficult of comprehension than that with which he was familiar.

For several minutes after An-Tak ceased speaking, his voice having trailed off weakly into silence, neither spoke again. Then the Galu recommenced his, "Food! Food! There is a way out!" Bradley tossed him another bit of dried meat, waiting patiently until he had eaten it, this time more slowly.

"What do you mean by saying there is a way out?" he asked.

"He who died here just after I came, told me," replied An-Tak. "He said there was a way out, that he had discovered it but was too weak to use his knowledge. He was trying to tell me how to find it when he died. Oh, Luata, if he had lived but a moment more!"

"They do not feed you here?" asked Bradley.

"No, they give me water once a day—that is all."

"But how have you lived, then?"

"The lizards and the rats," replied An-Tak. "The lizards are not so bad; but the rats are foul to taste. However, I must eat them or they would eat me, and they are better than nothing; but of late they do not come so often, and I have not had a lizard for a long time. I shall eat though," he mumbled. "I shall eat now, for you cannot remain awake forever." He laughed, a cackling, dry laugh. "When you sleep, An-Tak will eat."

It was horrible. Bradley shuddered. For a long time each sat in silence. The Englishman could guess why the other made no sound—he awaited the moment that sleep should overcome his victim. In the long silence there was born upon Bradley's ears a faint, monotonous sound as of running water. He listened intently. It seemed to come from far beneath the floor.

"What is that noise?" he asked. "That sounds like water running through a narrow channel."

"It is the river," replied An-Tak. "Why do you not go to sleep? It passes directly beneath the Blue Place of Seven Skulls. It runs through the temple grounds, beneath the temple and under the city. When we die, they will cut off our heads and throw our bodies into the river. At the mouth of the river await many large reptiles. Thus do they feed. The Wierooos do likewise with their own dead, keeping only the skulls and the wings. Come, let us sleep."

"Do the reptiles come up the river into the city?" asked Bradley.

"The water is too cold—they never leave the warm water of the great pool," replied An-Tak.

"Let us search for the way out," suggested Bradley.

An-Tak shook his head. "I have searched for it all these moons," he said. "If I could not find it, how would you?"

Bradley made no reply but commenced a diligent examination of the walls and floor of the room, pressing over each square foot and tapping with his knuckles. About six feet from the floor he discovered a sleeping-perch near one end of the apartment. He asked An-Tak about it, but the Galu said that no Wieroo had occupied the place since he had been incarcerated there. Again and again Bradley went over the floor and walls as high up as he could reach. Finally he swung himself to the perch, that he might examine at

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

least one end of the room all the way to the ceiling.

In the center of the wall close to the top, an area about three feet square gave forth a hollow sound when he rapped upon it. Bradley felt over every square inch of that area with the tips of his fingers. Near the top he found a small round hole a trifle larger in diameter than his forefinger, which he immediately stuck into it. The panel, if such it was, seemed about an inch thick, and beyond it his finger encountered nothing. Bradley crooked his finger upon the opposite side of the panel and pulled toward him, steadily but with considerable force. Suddenly the panel flew inward, nearly precipitating the man to the floor. It was hinged at the bottom, and when lowered the outer edge rested upon the perch, making a little platform parallel with the floor of the room.

Beyond the opening was an utterly dark void. The Englishman leaned through it and reached his arm as far as possible into the blackness but touched nothing. Then he fumbled in his haversack for a match, a few of which remained to him. When he struck it, An-Tak gave a cry of terror. Bradley held the light far into the opening before him and in its flickering rays saw the top of a ladder descending into a black abyss below. How far down it extended he could not guess; but that he should soon know definitely he was positive.

"You have found it! You have found the way out!" screamed An-Tak. "Oh, Luata! And now I am too weak to go. Take me with you! Take me with you!"

"Shut up!" admonished Bradley. "You will have the whole flock of birds around our heads in a minute, and neither of us will escape. Be quiet, and I'll go ahead. If I find a way out, I'll come back and help you, if you'll promise not to try to eat me up again."

"I promise," cried An-Tak. "Oh, Luata! How could you blame me? I am half crazed of hunger and long confinement and the horror of the lizards and the rats and the constant waiting for death."

"I know," said Bradley simply. "I'm sorry for you, old top. Keep a stiff upper lip." And he slipped through the opening, found the ladder with his feet, closed the panel behind him, and started downward into the darkness.

Below him rose more and more distinctly the sound of running water. The air felt damp and cool. He could see nothing of his surroundings and felt nothing but the smooth, worn sides and rungs of the ladder down which he felt his way cautiously lest a broken rung or a misstep should hurl him downward.

As he descended thus slowly, the ladder seemed interminable and the pit bottomless, yet he realized when at last he reached the bottom that he could not have descended more than fifty feet. The bottom of the ladder rested on a narrow ledge paved with what felt like large round stones, but what he knew from experience to be human skulls. He could not but marvel as to where so many countless thousands of the things had come from, until he paused to consider that the infancy of Caspak dated doubtlessly back into remote ages, far beyond what the outer world considered the beginning of earthly time. For all these eons the Wieroos might have been collecting human skulls from their enemies and their own dead—enough to have built an entire city of them.

Feeling his way along the narrow ledge, Bradley came presently to a blank wall that stretched out over the water swirling beneath him, as far as he could reach. Stooping, he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

groped about with one hand, reaching down toward the surface of the water, and discovered that the bottom of the wall arched above the stream. How much space there was between the water and the arch he could not tell, nor how deep the former. There was only one way in which he might learn these things, and that was to lower himself into the stream. For only an instant he hesitated weighing his chances. Behind him lay almost certainly the horrid fate of An-Tak; before him nothing worse than a comparatively painless death by drowning. Holding his haversack above his head with one hand he lowered his feet slowly over the edge of the narrow platform. Almost immediately he felt the swirling of cold water about his ankles, and then with a silent prayer he let himself drop gently into the stream.

Great was Bradley's relief when he found the water no more than waist deep and beneath his feet a firm, gravel bottom. Feeling his way cautiously he moved downward with the current, which was not so strong as he had imagined from the noise of the running water.

Beneath the first arch he made his way, following the winding curvatures of the right-hand wall. After a few yards of progress his hand came suddenly in contact with a slimy thing clinging to the wall—a thing that hissed and scuttled out of reach. What it was, the man could not know; but almost instantly there was a splash in the water just ahead of him and then another.

On he went, passing beneath other arches at varying distances, and always in utter darkness. Unseen denizens of this great sewer, disturbed by the intruder, splashed into the water ahead of him and wriggled away. Time and again his hand touched them and never for an instant could he be sure that at the next step some gruesome thing might not attack him. He had strapped his haversack about his neck, well above the surface of the water, and in his left hand he carried his knife. Other precautions there were none to take.

The monotony of the blind trail was increased by the fact that from the moment he had started from the foot of the ladder he had counted his every step. He had promised to return for An-Tak if it proved humanly possible to do so, and he knew that in the blackness of the tunnel he could locate the foot of the ladder in no other way.

He had taken two hundred and sixty-nine steps—afterward he knew that he should never forget that number—when something bumped gently against him from behind. Instantly he wheeled about and with knife ready to defend himself stretched forth his right hand to push away the object that now had lodged against his body. His fingers feeling through the darkness came in contact with something cold and clammy—they passed to and fro over the thing until Bradley knew that it was the face of a dead man floating upon the surface of the stream. With an oath he pushed his gruesome companion out into mid-stream to float on down toward the great pool and the awaiting scavengers of the deep.

At his four hundred and thirteenth step another corpse bumped against him—how many had passed him without touching he could not guess; but suddenly he experienced the sensation of being surrounded by dead faces floating along with him, all set in hideous grimaces, their dead eyes glaring at this profaning alien who dared intrude upon the waters of this river of the dead—a horrid escort, pregnant with dire forebod-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ings and with menace.

Though he advanced very slowly, he tried always to take steps of about the same length; so that he knew that though considerable time had elapsed, yet he had really advanced no more than four hundred yards when ahead he saw a lessening of the pitch-darkness, and at the next turn of the stream his surroundings became vaguely discernible. Above him was an arched roof and on either hand walls pierced at intervals by apertures covered with wooden doors. Just ahead of him in the roof of the aqueduct was a round, black hole about thirty inches in diameter. His eyes still rested upon the opening when there shot downward from it to the water below the naked body of a human being which almost immediately rose to the surface again and floated off down the stream. In the dim light Bradley saw that it was a dead Wieroo from which the wings and head had been removed. A moment later another headless body floated past, recalling what An-Tak had told him of the skull-collecting customs of the Wieroo. Bradley wondered how it happened that the first corpse he had encountered in the stream had not been similarly mutilated.

The farther he advanced now, the lighter it became. The number of corpses was much smaller than he had imagined, only two more passing him before, at six hundred steps, or about five hundred yards, from the point he had taken to the stream, he came to the end of the tunnel and looked out upon sunlit water, running between grassy banks.

One of the last corpses to pass him was still clothed in the white robe of a Wieroo, bloodstained over the headless neck that it concealed.

Drawing closer to the opening leading into the bright daylight, Bradley surveyed what lay beyond. A short distance before him a large building stood in the center of several acres of grass and tree-covered ground, spanning the stream which disappeared through an opening in its foundation wall. From the large saucer-shaped roof and the vivid colorings of the various heterogeneous parts of the structure he recognized it as the temple past which he had been borne to the Blue Place of Seven Skulls.

To and fro flew Wieroos, going to and from the temple. Others passed on foot across the open grounds, assisting themselves with their great wings, so that they barely skimmed the earth. To leave the mouth of the tunnel would have been to court instant discovery and capture; but by what other avenue he might escape, Bradley could not guess, unless he retraced his steps up the stream and sought egress from the other end of the city. The thought of traversing that dark and horror-ridden tunnel for perhaps miles he could not entertain—there must be some other way. Perhaps after dark he could steal through the temple grounds and continue on downstream until he had come beyond the city; and so he stood and waited until his limbs became almost paralyzed with cold, and he knew that he must find some other plan for escape.

A half-formed decision to risk an attempt to swim under water to the temple was crystallizing in spite of the fact that any chance Wieroo flying above the stream might easily see him, when again a floating object bumped against him from behind and lodged across his back. Turning quickly he saw that the thing was what he had immediately guessed it to be—a headless and wingless Wieroo corpse. With a grunt of disgust he was about to push it from him when the white garment enshrouding it suggested a bold plan to his resourceful brain. Grasping the corpse by an arm he tore the garment from it

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and then let the body float downward toward the temple. With great care he draped the robe about him; the bloody blotch that had covered the severed neck he arranged about his own head. His haversack he rolled as tightly as possible and stuffed beneath his coat over his breast. Then he fell gently to the surface of the stream and lying upon his back floated downward with the current and out into the open sunlight.

Through the weave of the cloth he could distinguish large objects. He saw a Wieroo flap dismally above him; he saw the banks of the stream float slowly past; he heard a sudden wail upon the right-hand shore, and his heart stood still lest his ruse had been discovered; but never by a move of a muscle did he betray that aught but a cold lump of clay floated there upon the bosom of the water, and soon, though it seemed an eternity to him, the direct sunlight was blotted out, and he knew that he had entered beneath the temple.

Quickly he felt for bottom with his feet and as quickly stood erect, snatching the bloody, clammy cloth from his face. On both sides were blank walls and before him the river turned a sharp corner and disappeared. Feeling his way cautiously forward he approached the turn and looked around the corner. To his left was a low platform about a foot above the level of the stream, and onto this he lost no time in climbing, for he was soaked from head to foot, cold and almost exhausted.

As he lay resting on the skull-paved shelf, he saw in the center of the vault above the river another of those sinister round holes through which he momentarily expected to see a headless corpse shoot downward in its last plunge to a watery grave. A few feet along the platform a closed door broke the blankness of the wall. As he lay looking at it and wondering what lay behind, his mind filled with fragments of many wild schemes of escape, it opened and a white robed Wieroo stepped out upon the platform. The creature carried a large wooden basin filled with rubbish. Its eyes were not upon Bradley, who drew himself to a squatting position and crouched as far back in the corner of the niche in which the platform was set as he could force himself. The Wieroo stepped to the edge of the platform and dumped the rubbish into the stream. If it turned away from him as it started to retrace its steps to the doorway, there was a small chance that it might not see him; but if it turned toward him there was none at all. Bradley held his breath.

The Wieroo paused a moment, gazing down into the water, then it straightened up and turned toward the Englishman. Bradley did not move. The Wieroo stopped and stared intently at him. It approached him questioningly. Still Bradley remained as though carved of stone. The creature was directly in front of him. It stopped. There was no chance on earth that it would not discover what he was.

With the quickness of a cat, Bradley sprang to his feet and with all his great strength, backed by his heavy weight, struck the Wieroo upon the point of the chin. Without a sound the thing crumpled to the platform, while Bradley, acting almost instinctively to the urge of the first law of nature, rolled the inanimate body over the edge into the river.

Then he looked at the open doorway, crossed the platform and peered within the apartment beyond. What he saw was a large room, dimly lighted, and about the side rows of wooden vessels stacked one upon another. There was no Wieroo in sight, so the Englishman entered. At the far end of the room was another door, and as he crossed toward it, he glanced into some of the vessels, which he found were filled with dried

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

fruits, vegetables and fish. Without more ado he stuffed his pockets and his haversack full, thinking of the poor creature awaiting his return in the gloom of the Place of Seven Skulls.

When night came, he would return and fetch An-Tak this far at least; but in the meantime it was his intention to reconnoiter in the hope that he might discover some easier way out of the city than that offered by the chill, black channel of the ghastly river of corpses.

Beyond the farther door stretched a long passageway from which closed doorways led into other parts of the cellars of the temple. A few yards from the storeroom a ladder rose from the corridor through an aperture in the ceiling. Bradley paused at the foot of it, debating the wisdom of further investigation against a return to the river; but strong within him was the spirit of exploration that has scattered his race to the four corners of the earth. What new mysteries lay hidden in the chambers above? The urge to know was strong upon him though his better judgment warned him that the safer course lay in retreat. For a moment he stood thus, running his fingers through his hair; then he cast discretion to the winds and began the ascent.

In conformity with such Wieroo architecture as he had already observed, the well through which the ladder rose continually canted at an angle from the perpendicular. At more or less regular stages it was pierced by apertures closed by doors, none of which he could open until he had climbed fully fifty feet from the river level. Here he discovered a door already ajar opening into a large, circular chamber, the walls and floors of which were covered with the skins of wild beasts and with rugs of many colors; but what interested him most was the occupants of the room—a Wieroo, and a girl of human proportions. She was standing with her back against a column which rose from the center of the apartment from floor to ceiling—a hollow column about forty inches in diameter in which he could see an opening some thirty inches across. The girl's side was toward Bradley, and her face averted, for she was watching the Wieroo, who was now advancing slowly toward her, talking as he came.

Bradley could distinctly hear the words of the creature, who was urging the girl to accompany him to another Wieroo city. "Come with me," he said, "and you shall have your life; remain here and He Who Speaks for Luata will claim you for his own; and when he is done with you, your skull will bleach at the top of a tall staff while your body feeds the reptiles at the mouth of the River of Death. Even though you bring into the world a female Wieroo, your fate will be the same if you do not escape him, while with me you shall have life and food and none shall harm you."

He was quite close to the girl when she replied by striking him in the face with all her strength.

"Until I am slain," she cried, "I shall fight against you all." From the throat of the Wieroo issued that dismal wail that Bradley had heard so often in the past—it was like a scream of pain smothered to a groan—and then the thing leaped upon the girl, its face working in hideous grimaces as it clawed and beat at her to force her to the floor.

The Englishman was upon the point of entering to defend her when a door at the opposite side of the chamber opened to admit a huge Wieroo clothed entirely in red. At

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

sight of the two struggling upon the floor the newcomer raised his voice in a shriek of rage. Instantly the Wieroo who was attacking the girl leaped to his feet and faced the other.

"I heard," screamed he who had just entered the room. "I heard, and when He Who Speaks for Lu-ata shall have heard—" He paused and made a suggestive movement of a finger across his throat.

"He shall not hear," returned the first Wieroo as, with a powerful motion of his great wings, he launched himself upon the red-robed figure. The latter dodged the first charge, drew a wicked-looking curved blade from beneath its red robe, spread its wings and dived for its antagonist. Beating their wings, wailing and groaning, the two hideous things sparred for position. The white-robed one being unarmed sought to grasp the other by the wrist of its knife-hand and by the throat, while the latter hopped around on its dainty white feet, seeking an opening for a mortal blow. Once it struck and missed, and then the other rushed in and clinched, at the same time securing both the holds it sought. Immediately the two commenced beating at each other's heads with the joints of their wings, kicking with their soft, puny feet and biting, each at the other's face.

In the meantime the girl moved about the room, keeping out of the way of the duelists, and as she did so, Bradley caught a glimpse of her full face and immediately recognized her as the girl of the place of the yellow door. He did not dare intervene now until one of the Wieroo had overcome the other, lest the two should turn upon him at once, when the chances were fair that he would be defeated in so unequal a battle as the curved blade of the red Wieroo would render it, and so he waited, watching the white-robed figure slowly choking the life from him of the red robe. The protruding tongue and the popping eyes proclaimed that the end was near and a moment later the red robe sank to the floor of the room, the curved blade slipping from nerveless fingers. For an instant longer the victor clung to the throat of his defeated antagonist and then he rose, dragging the body after him, and approached the central column. Here he raised the body and thrust it into the aperture where Bradley saw it drop suddenly from sight. Instantly there flashed into his memory the circular openings in the roof of the river vault and the corpses he had seen drop from them to the water beneath.

As the body disappeared, the Wieroo turned and cast about the room for the girl. For a moment he stood eying her. "You saw," he muttered, "and if you tell them, He Who Speaks for Luata will have my wings severed while still I live and my head will be severed and I shall be cast into the River of Death, for thus it happens even to the highest who slay one of the red robe. You saw, and you must die!" he ended with a scream as he rushed upon the girl.

Bradley waited no longer. Leaping into the room he ran for the Wieroo, who had already seized the girl, and as he ran, he stooped and picked up the curved blade. The creature's back was toward him as, with his left hand, he seized it by the neck. Like a flash the great wings beat backward as the creature turned, and Bradley was swept from his feet, though he still retained his hold upon the blade. Instantly the Wieroo was upon him. Bradley lay slightly raised upon his left elbow, his right arm free, and as the thing came close, he cut at the hideous face with all the strength that lay within him. The blade struck at the junction of the neck and torso and with such force as to completely decapi-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tate the Wieroo, the hideous head dropping to the floor and the body falling forward upon the Englishman. Pushing it from him he rose to his feet and faced the wide-eyed girl.

“Luata!” she exclaimed. “How came you here?”

Bradley shrugged. “Here I am,” he said; “but the thing now is to get out of here—both of us.”

The girl shook her head. “It cannot be,” she stated sadly.

“That is what I thought when they dropped me into the Blue Place of Seven Skulls,” replied Bradley. “Can’t be done. I did it.—Here! You’re mussing up the floor something awful, you.” This last to the dead Wieroo as he stooped and dragged the corpse to the central shaft, where he raised it to the aperture and let it slip into the tube. Then he picked up the head and tossed it after the body. “Don’t be so glum,” he admonished the former as he carried it toward the well; “smile!”

“But how can he smile?” questioned the girl, a half-puzzled, half-frightened look upon her face. “He is dead.”

“That’s so,” admitted Bradley, “and I suppose he does feel a bit cut up about it.”

The girl shook her head and edged away from the man—toward the door.

“Come!” said the Englishman. “We’ve got to get out of here. If you don’t know a better way than the river, it’s the river then.”

The girl still eyed him askance. “But how could he smile when he was dead?”

Bradley laughed aloud. “I thought we English were supposed to have the least sense of humor of any people in the world,” he cried; “but now I’ve found one human being who hasn’t any. Of course you don’t know half I’m saying; but don’t worry, little girl; I’m not going to hurt you, and if I can get you out of here, I’ll do it.

Even if she did not understand all he said, she at least read something in his smiling, countenance—something which reassured her. “I do not fear you,” she said; “though I do not understand all that you say even though you speak my own tongue and use words that I know. But as for escaping”—she sighed—“alas, how can it be done?”

“I escaped from the Blue Place of Seven Skulls,” Bradley reminded her. “Come!” And he turned toward the shaft and the ladder that he had ascended from the river. “We cannot waste time here.”

The girl followed him; but at the doorway both drew back, for from below came the sound of some one ascending.

Bradley tiptoed to the door and peered cautiously into the well; then he stepped back beside the girl. “There are half a dozen of them coming up; but possibly they will pass this room.”

“No,” she said, “they will pass directly through this room—they are on their way to Him Who Speaks for Luata. We may be able to hide in the next room—there are skins there beneath which we may crawl. They will not stop in that room; but they may stop in this one for a short time—the other room is blue.”

“What’s that go to do with it?” demanded the Englishman.

“They fear blue,” she replied. “In every room where murder has been done you

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

will find blue—a certain amount for each murder. When the room is all blue, they shun it. This room has much blue; but evidently they kill mostly in the next room, which is now all blue.”

“But there is blue on the outside of every house I have seen,” said Bradley.

“Yes,” assented the girl, “and there are blue rooms in each of those houses—when all the rooms are blue then the whole outside of the house will be blue as is the Blue Place of Seven Skulls. There are many such here.”

“And the skulls with blue upon them?” inquired Bradley. “Did they belong to murderers?”

“They were murdered—some of them; those with only a small amount of blue were murderers—known murderers. All Wieroos are murderers. When they have committed a certain number of murders without being caught at it, they confess to Him Who Speaks for Luata and are advanced, after which they wear robes with a slash of some color—I think yellow comes first. When they reach a point where the entire robe is of yellow, they discard it for a white robe with a red slash; and when one wins a complete red robe, he carries such a long, curved knife as you have in your hand; after that comes the blue slash on a white robe, and then, I suppose, an all blue robe. I have never seen such a one.”

As they talked in low tones they had moved from the room of the death shaft into an all blue room adjoining, where they sat down together in a corner with their backs against a wall and drew a pile of hides over themselves. A moment later they heard a number of Wieroos enter the chamber. They were talking together as they crossed the floor, or the two could not have heard them. Halfway across the chamber they halted as the door toward which they were advancing opened and a dozen others of their kind entered the apartment.

Bradley could guess all this by the increased volume of sound and the dismal greetings; but the sudden silence that almost immediately ensued he could not fathom, for he could not know that from beneath one of the hides that covered him protruded one of his heavy army shoes, or that some eighteen large Wieroos with robes either solid red or slashed with red or blue were standing gazing at it. Nor could he hear their stealthy approach.

The first intimation he had that he had been discovered was when his foot was suddenly seized, and he was yanked violently from beneath the hides to find himself surrounded by menacing blades. They would have slain him on the spot had not one clothed all in red held them back, saying that He Who Speaks for Luata desired to see this strange creature.

As they led Bradley away, he caught an opportunity to glance back toward the hides to see what had become of the girl, and, to his gratification, he discovered that she still lay concealed beneath the hides. He wondered if she would have the nerve to attempt the river trip alone and regretted that now he could not accompany her. He felt rather all in, himself, more so than he had at any time since he had been captured by the Wieroo, for there appeared not the slightest cause for hope in his present predicament. He had dropped the curved blade beneath the hides when he had been jerked so violently from

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

their fancied security. It was almost in a spirit of resigned hopelessness that he quietly accompanied his captors through various chambers and corridors toward the heart of the temple.

The farther the group progressed, the more barbaric and the more sumptuous became the decorations. Hides of leopard and tiger predominated, apparently because of their more beautiful markings, and decorative skulls became more and more numerous. Many of the latter were mounted in precious metals and set with colored stones and priceless gems, while thick upon the hides that covered the walls were golden ornaments similar to those worn by the girl and those which had filled the chests he had examined in the storeroom of Fosh-bal-soj, leading the Englishman to the conviction that all such were spoils of war or theft, since each piece seemed made for personal adornment, while in so far as he had seen, no Wieroo wore ornaments of any sort.

And also as they advanced the more numerous became the Wieroos moving hither and thither within the temple. Many now wore the solid red robes and those that were slashed with blue—a veritable hive of murderers.

At last the party halted in a room in which were many Wieroos who gathered about Bradley questioning his captors and examining him and his apparel. One of the party accompanying the Englishman spoke to a Wieroo that stood beside a door leading from the room. "Tell Him Who Speaks for Luata," he said, "that Fosh-bal-soj we could not find; but that in returning we found this creature within the temple, hiding. It must be the same that Foshbal-soj captured in the Sto-lu country during the last darkness. Doubtless He Who Speaks for Luata would wish to see and question this strange thing."

The creature addressed turned and slipped through the doorway, closing the door after it, but first depositing its curved blade upon the floor without. Its post was immediately taken by another and Bradley now saw that at least twenty such guards loitered in the immediate vicinity. The doorkeeper was gone but for a moment, and when he returned, he signified that Bradley's party was to enter the next chamber; but first each of the Wieroos removed his curved weapon and laid it upon the floor. The door was swung open, and the party, now reduced to Bradley and five Wieroos, was ushered across the threshold into a large, irregularly shaped room in which a single, giant Wieroo whose robe was solid blue sat upon a raised dais.

The creature's face was white with the whiteness of a corpse, its dead eyes entirely expressionless, its cruel, thin lips tight-drawn against yellow teeth in a perpetual grimace. Upon either side of it lay an enormous, curved sword, similar to those with which some of the other Wieroos had been armed, but larger and heavier. Constantly its clawlike fingers played with one or the other of these weapons.

The walls of the chamber as well as the floor were entirely hidden by skins and woven fabrics. Blue predominated in all the colorations. Fastened against the hides were many pairs of Wieroo wings, mounted so that they resembled long, black shields. Upon the ceiling were painted in blue characters a bewildering series of hieroglyphics and upon pedestals set against the walls or standing out well within the room were many human skulls.

As the Wieroos approached the figure upon the dais, they leaned far forward, rais-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing their wings above their heads and stretching their necks as though offering them to the sharp swords of the grim and hideous creature.

“O Thou Who Speakest for Luata!” exclaimed one of the party. “We bring you the strange creature that Fosh-bal-soj captured and brought thither at thy command.”

So this then was the godlike figure that spoke for divinity! This arch-murderer was the Caspakian representative of God on Earth! His blue robe announced him the one and the seeming humility of his minions the other. For a long minute he glared at Bradley. Then he began to question him—from whence he came and how, the name and description of his native country, and a hundred other queries.

“Are you cos-ata-lu?” the creature asked.

Bradley replied that he was and that all his kind were, as well as every living thing in his part of the world.

“Can you tell me the secret?” asked the creature.

Bradley hesitated and then, thinking to gain time, replied in the affirmative.

“What is it?” demanded the Wieroo, leaning far forward and exhibiting every evidence of excited interest.

Bradley leaned forward and whispered: “It is for your ears alone; I will not divulge it to others, and then only on condition that you carry me and the girl I saw in the place of the yellow door near to that of Foshbal-soj back to her own country.”

The thing rose in wrath, holding one of its swords above its head.

“Who are you to make terms for Him Who Speaks for Luata?” it shrieked. “Tell me the secret or die where you stand!”

“And if I die now, the secret goes with me,” Bradley reminded him. “Never again will you get the opportunity to question another of my kind who knows the secret.” Anything to gain time, to get the rest of the Wieroos from the room, that he might plan some scheme for escape and put it into effect.

The creature turned upon the leader of the party that had brought Bradley.

“Is the thing with weapons?” it asked.

“No,” was the response.

“Then go; but tell the guard to remain close by,” commanded the high one.

The Wieroos salaamed and withdrew, closing the door behind them. He Who Speaks for Luata grasped a sword nervously in his right hand. At his left side lay the second weapon. It was evident that he lived in constant dread of being assassinated. The fact that he permitted none with weapons within his presence and that he always kept two swords at his side pointed to this.

Bradley was racking his brain to find some suggestion of a plan whereby he might turn the situation to his own account. His eyes wandered past the weird figure before him; they played about the walls of the apartment as though hoping to draw inspiration from the dead skulls and the hides and the wings, and then they came back to the face of the Wieroo god, now working in anger.

“Quick!” screamed the thing. “The secret!”

“Will you give me and the girl our freedom?” insisted Bradley.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

For an instant the thing hesitated, and then it grumbled "Yes." At the same instant Bradley saw two hides upon the wall directly back of the dais separate and a face appear in the opening. No change of expression upon the Englishman's countenance betrayed that he had seen aught to surprise him, though surprised he was for the face in the aperture was that of the girl he had but just left hidden beneath the hides in another chamber. A white and shapely arm now pushed past the face into the room, and in the hand, tightly clutched, was the curved blade, smeared with blood, that Bradley had dropped beneath the hides at the moment he had been discovered and drawn from his concealment.

"Listen, then," said Bradley in a low voice to the Wieroo. "You shall know the secret of cos-ata-lu as well as do I; but none other may hear it. Lean close—I will whisper it into your ear."

He moved forward and stepped upon the dais. The creature raised its sword ready to strike at the first indication of treachery, and Bradley stooped beneath the blade and put his ear close to the gruesome face. As he did so, he rested his weight upon his hands, one upon either side of the Wieroo's body, his right hand upon the hilt of the spare sword lying at the left of Him Who Speaks for Luata.

"This then is the secret of both life and death," he whispered, and at the same instant he grasped the Wieroo by the right wrist and with his own right hand swung the extra blade in a sudden vicious blow against the creature's neck before the thing could give even a single cry of alarm; then without waiting an instant Bradley leaped past the dead god and vanished behind the hides that had hidden the girl.

Wide-eyed and panting the girl seized his arm. "Oh, what have you done?" she cried. "He Who Speaks for Luata will be avenged by Luata. Now indeed must you die. There is no escape, for even though we reached my own country Luata can find you out."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Bradley, and then: "But you were going to knife him yourself."

"Then I alone should have died," she replied.

Bradley scratched his head. "Neither of us is going to die," he said; "at least not at the hands of any god. If we don't get out of here though, we'll die right enough. Can you find your way back to the room where I first came upon you in the temple?"

"I know the way," replied the girl; "but I doubt if we can go back without being seen. I came hither because I only met Wieroos who knew that I am supposed now to be in the temple; but you could go elsewhere without being discovered."

Bradley's ingenuity had come up against a stone wall. There seemed no possibility of escape. He looked about him. They were in a small room where lay a litter of rubbish—torn bits of cloth, old hides, pieces of fiber rope. In the center of the room was a cylindrical shaft with an opening in its face. Bradley knew it for what it was. Here the arch-fiend dragged his victims and cast their bodies into the river of death far below. The floor about the opening in the shaft and the sides of the shaft were clotted thick with a dried, dark brown substance that the Englishman knew had once been blood. The place had the appearance of having been a veritable shambles. An odor of decaying flesh permeated the air.

The Englishman crossed to the shaft and peered into the opening. All below was dark as pitch; but at the bottom he knew was the river. Suddenly an inspiration and a

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

bold scheme leaped to his mind. Turning quickly he hunted about the room until he found what he sought—a quantity of the rope that lay strewn here and there. With rapid fingers he unsnarled the different lengths, the girl helping him, and then he tied the ends together until he had three ropes about seventy-five feet in length. He fastened these together at each end and without a word secured one of the ends about the girl's body beneath her arms.

"Don't be frightened," he said at length, as he led her toward the opening in the shaft. "I'm going to lower you to the river, and then I'm coming down after you. When you are safe below, give two quick jerks upon the rope. If there is danger there and you want me to draw you up into the shaft, jerk once. Don't be afraid—it is the only way."

"I am not afraid," replied the girl, rather haughtily Bradley thought, and herself climbed through the aperture and hung by her hands waiting for Bradley to lower her.

As rapidly as was consistent with safety, the man paid out the rope. When it was about half out, he heard loud cries and wails suddenly arise within the room they had just quitted. The slaying of their god had been discovered by the Wieroos. A search for the slayer would begin at once.

Lord! Would the girl never reach the river? At last, just as he was positive that searchers were already entering the room behind him, there came two quick tugs at the rope. Instantly Bradley made the rest of the strands fast about the shaft, slipped into the black tube and began a hurried descent toward the river. An instant later he stood waist deep in water beside the girl. Impulsively she reached toward him and grasped his arm. A strange thrill ran through him at the contact; but he only cut the rope from about her body and lifted her to the little shelf at the river's side.

"How can we leave here?" she asked.

"By the river," he replied; "but first I must go back to the Blue Place of Seven Skulls and get the poor devil I left there. I'll have to wait until after dark, though, as I cannot pass through the open stretch of river in the temple gardens by day."

"There is another way," said the girl. "I have never seen it; but often I have heard them speak of it—a corridor that runs beside the river from one end of the city to the other. Through the gardens it is below ground. If we could find an entrance to it, we could leave here at once. It is not safe here, for they will search every inch of the temple and the grounds."

"Come," said Bradley. "We'll have a look for it, anyway." And so saying he approached one of the doors that opened onto the skull-paved shelf.

They found the corridor easily, for it paralleled the river, separated from it only by a single wall. It took them beneath the gardens and the city, always through inky darkness. After they had reached the other side of the gardens, Bradley counted his steps until he had retraced as many as he had taken coming down the stream; but though they had to grope their way along, it was a much more rapid trip than the former.

When he thought he was about opposite the point at which he had descended from the Blue Place of Seven Skulls, he sought and found a doorway leading out onto the river; and then, still in the blackest darkness, he lowered himself into the stream and felt up and down upon the opposite side for the little shelf and the ladder. Ten yards from where

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

he had emerged he found them, while the girl waited upon the opposite side.

To ascend to the secret panel was the work of but a minute. Here he paused and listened lest a Wieroo might be visiting the prison in search of him or the other inmate; but no sound came from the gloomy interior. Bradley could not but muse upon the joy of the man on the opposite side when he should drop down to him with food and a new hope for escape. Then he opened the panel and looked into the room. The faint light from the grating above revealed the pile of rags in one corner; but the man lay beneath them, he made no response to Bradley's low greeting.

The Englishman lowered himself to the floor of the room and approached the rags. Stooping he lifted a corner of them. Yes, there was the man asleep. Bradley shook him—there was no response. He stooped lower and in the dim light examined An-Tak; then he stood up with a sigh. A rat leaped from beneath the coverings and scurried away. "Poor devil!" muttered Bradley.

He crossed the room to swing himself to the perch preparatory to quitting the Blue Place of Seven Skulls forever. Beneath the perch he paused. "I'll not give them the satisfaction," he growled. "Let them believe that he escaped."

Returning to the pile of rags he gathered the man into his arms. It was difficult work raising him to the high perch and dragging him through the small opening and thus down the ladder; but presently it was done, and Bradley had lowered the body into the river and cast it off. "Good-bye, old top!" he whispered.

A moment later he had rejoined the girl and hand in hand they were following the dark corridor upstream toward the farther end of the city. She told him that the Wieroos seldom frequented these lower passages, as the air here was too chill for them; but occasionally they came, and as they could see quite as well by night as by day, they would be sure to discover Bradley and the girl.

"If they come close enough," she said, "we can see their eyes shining in the dark—they resemble dull splotches of light. They glow, but do not blaze like the eyes of the tiger or the lion."

The man could not but note the very evident horror with which she mentioned the creatures. To him they were uncanny; but she had been used to them for a year almost, and probably all her life she had either seen or heard of them constantly.

"Why do you fear them so?" he asked. "It seems more than any ordinary fear of the harm they can do you."

She tried to explain; but the nearest he could gather was that she looked upon the Wieroo almost as supernatural beings. "There is a legend current among my people that once the Wieroo were unlike us only in that they possessed rudimentary wings. They lived in villages in the Galu country, and while the two peoples often warred, they held no hatred for one another. In those days each race came up from the beginning and there was great rivalry as to which was the higher in the scale of evolution. The Wieroo developed the first *cos-atalu* but they were always male—never could they reproduce woman. Slowly they commenced to develop certain attributes of the mind which, they considered, placed them upon a still higher level and which gave them many advantages over us, seeing which they thought only of mental development—their minds be-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

came like stars and the rivers, moving always in the same manner, never varying. They called this tas-ad, which means doing everything the right way, or, in other words, the Wieroo way. If foe or friend, right or wrong, stood in the way of tas-ad, then it must be crushed.

“Soon the Galus and the lesser races of men came to hate and fear them. It was then that the Wieroos decided to carry tas-ad into every part of the world. They were very warlike and very numerous, although they had long since adopted the policy of slaying all those among them whose wings did not show advanced development.

“It took ages for all this to happen—very slowly came the different changes; but at last the Wieroos had wings they could use. But by reason of always making war upon their neighbors they were hated by every creature of Caspak, for no one wanted their tas-ad, and so they used their wings to fly to this island when the other races turned against them and threatened to kill them all. So cruel had they become and so blood-thirsty that they no longer had hearts that beat with love or sympathy; but their very cruelty and wickedness kept them from conquering the other races, since they were also cruel and wicked to one another, so that no Wieroo trusted another.

“Always were they slaying those above them that they might rise in power and possessions, until at last came the more powerful than the others with a tas-ad all his own. He gathered about him a few of the most terrible Wieroos, and among them they made laws which took from all but these few Wieroos every weapon they possessed.

“Now their tas-ad has reached a high plane among them. They make many wonderful things that we cannot make. They think great thoughts, no doubt, and still dream of greatness to come, but their thoughts and their acts are regulated by ages of custom—they are all alike—and they are most unhappy.

As the girl talked, the two moved steadily along the dark passageway beside the river. They had advanced a considerable distance when there sounded faintly from far ahead the muffled roar of falling water, which increased in volume as they moved forward until at last it filled the corridor with a deafening sound. Then the corridor ended in a blank wall; but in a niche to the right was a ladder leading aloft, and to the left was a door opening onto the river. Bradley tried the latter first and as he opened it, felt a heavy spray against his face. The little shelf outside the doorway was wet and slippery, the roaring of the water tremendous. There could be but one explanation—they had reached a waterfall in the river, and if the corridor actually terminated here, their escape was effectually cut off, since it was quite evidently impossible to follow the bed of the river and ascend the falls.

As the ladder was the only alternative, the two turned toward it and, the man first, began the ascent, which was through a well similar to that which had led him to the upper floors of the temple. As he climbed, Bradley felt for openings in the sides of the shaft; but he discovered none below fifty feet. The first he came to was ajar, letting a faint light into the well. As he paused, the girl climbed to his side, and together they looked through the crack into a lowceiled chamber in which were several Galu women and an equal number of hideous little replicas of the full-grown Wieroos with which Bradley was not quite familiar.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

He could feel the body of the girl pressed close to his tremble as her eyes rested upon the inmates of the room, and involuntarily his arm encircled her shoulders as though to protect her from some danger which he sensed without recognizing.

"Poor things," she whispered. "This is their horrible fate—to be imprisoned here beneath the surface of the city with their hideous offspring whom they hate as they hate their fathers. A Wieroo keeps his children thus hidden until they are full-grown lest they be murdered by their fellows. The lower rooms of the city are filled with many such as these."

Several feet above was a second door beyond which they found a small room stored with food in wooden vessels. A grated window in one wall opened above an alley, and through it they could see that they were just below the roof of the building. Darkness was coming, and at Bradley's suggestion they decided to remain hidden here until after dark and then to ascend to the roof and reconnoiter.

Shortly after they had settled themselves they heard something descending the ladder from above. They hoped that it would continue on down the well and fairly held their breath as the sound approached the door to the storeroom. Their hearts sank as they heard the door open and from between cracks in the vessels behind which they hid saw a yellow-slashed Wieroo enter the room. Each recognized him immediately, the girl indicating the fact of her own recognition by a sudden pressure of her fingers on Bradley's arm. It was the Wieroo of the yellow slashing whose abode was the place of the yellow door in which Bradley had first seen the girl.

The creature carried a wooden bowl which it filled with dried food from several of the vessels; then it turned and quit the room. Bradley could see through the partially open doorway that it descended the ladder. The girl told him that it was taking the food to the women and the young below, and that while it might return immediately, the chances were that it would remain for some time.

"We are just below the place of the yellow door," she said. "It is far from the edge of the city; so far that we may not hope to escape if we ascend to the roofs here."

"I think," replied the man, "that of all the places in Oo-oh this will be the easiest to escape from. Anyway, I want to return to the place of the yellow door and get my pistol if it is there."

"It is still there," replied, the girl. "I saw it placed in a chest where he keeps the things he takes from his prisoners and victims."

"Good!" exclaimed Bradley. "Now come, quickly. "And the two crossed the room to the well and ascended the ladder a short distance to its top where they found another door that opened into a vacant room—the same in which Bradley had first met the girl. To find the pistol was a matter of but a moment's search on the part of Bradley's companion; and then, at the Englishman's signal, she followed him to the yellow door.

It was quite dark without as the two entered the narrow passage between two buildings. A few steps brought them undiscovered to the doorway of the storeroom where lay the body of Fosh-balsoj. In the distance, toward the temple, they could hear sounds as of a great gathering of Wieroos—the peculiar, uncanny wailing rising above the dismal flapping of countless wings.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"They have heard of the killing of Him Who Speaks for Luata," whispered the girl. "Soon they will spread in all directions searching for us."

"And will they find us?"

"As surely as Lua gives light by day," she replied; "and when they find us, they will tear us to pieces, for only the Wieroos may murder—only they may practice tas-ad."

"But they will not kill you," said Bradley. "You did not slay him."

"It will make no difference," she insisted. "If they find us together they will slay us both."

"Then they won't find us together," announced Bradley decisively. "You stay right here—you won't be any worse off than before I came—and I'll get as far as I can and account for as many of the beggars as possible before they get me. Good-bye! You're a mighty decent little girl. I wish that I might have helped you."

"No," she cried. "Do not leave me. I would rather die. I had hoped and hoped to find some way to return to my own country. I wanted to go back to An-Tak, who must be very lonely without me; but I know that it can never be. It is difficult to kill hope, though mine is nearly dead. Do not leave me."

"An-Tak!" Bradley repeated. "You loved a man called An-Tak?"

"Yes," replied the girl. "An-Tak was away, hunting, when the Wieroo caught me. How he must have grieved for me! He also was cos-ata-lu, twelve moons older than I, and all our lives we have been together."

Bradley remained silent. So she loved An-Tak. He hadn't the heart to tell her that An-Tak had died, or how.

At the door of Fosh-bal-soj's storeroom they halted to listen. No sound came from within, and gently Bradley pushed open the door. All was inky darkness as they entered; but presently their eyes became accustomed to the gloom that was partially relieved by the soft starlight without. The Englishman searched and found those things for which he had come—two robes, two pairs of dead wings and several lengths of fiber rope. One pair of the wings he adjusted to the girl's shoulders by means of the rope. Then he draped the robe about her, carrying the cowl over her head.

He heard her gasp of astonishment when she realized the ingenuity and boldness of his plan; then he directed her to adjust the other pair of wings and the robe upon him. Working with strong, deft fingers she soon had the work completed, and the two stepped out upon the roof, to all intent and purpose genuine Wieroos. Besides his pistol Bradley carried the sword of the slain Wieroo prophet, while the girl was armed with the small blade of the red Wieroo.

Side by side they walked slowly across the roofs toward the north edge of the city. Wieroos flapped above them and several times they passed others walking or sitting upon the roofs. From the temple still rose the sounds of commotion, now pierced by occasional shrill screams.

"The murderers are abroad," whispered the girl. "Thus will another become the tongue of Luata. It is well for us, since it keeps them too busy to give the time for searching for us. They think that we cannot escape the city, and they know that we cannot leave the island—and so do I."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Bradley shook his head. "If there is any way, we will find it," he said.

"There is no way," replied the girl.

Bradley made no response, and in silence they continued until the outer edge of roofs was visible before them. "We are almost there," he whispered.

The girl felt for his fingers and pressed them. He could feel hers trembling as he returned the pressure, nor did he relinquish her hand; and thus they came to the edge of the last roof.

Here they halted and looked about them. To be seen attempting to descend to the ground below would be to betray the fact that they were not Wieroos. Bradley wished that their wings were attached to their bodies by sinew and muscle rather than by ropes of fiber. A Wieroo was flapping far overhead. Two more stood near a door a few yards distant. Standing between these and one of the outer pedestals that supported one of the numerous skulls Bradley made one end of a piece of rope fast about the pedestal and dropped the other end to the ground outside the city. Then they waited.

It was an hour before the coast was entirely clear and then a moment came when no Wieroo was in sight. "Now!" whispered Bradley; and the girl grasped the rope and slid over the edge of the roof into the darkness below. A moment later Bradley felt two quick pulls upon the rope and immediately followed to the girl's side.

Across a narrow clearing they made their way and into a wood beyond. All night they walked, following the river upward toward its source, and at dawn they took shelter in a thicket beside the stream. At no time did they hear the cry of a carnivore, and though many startled animals fled as they approached, they were not once menaced by a wild beast. When Bradley expressed surprise at the absence of the fiercest beasts that are so numerous upon the mainland of Caprona, the girl explained the reason that is contained in one of their ancient legends.

"When the Wieroos first developed wings upon which they could fly, they found this island devoid of any life other than a few reptiles that live either upon land or in the water and these only close to the coast. Requiring meat for food the Wieroos carried to the island such animals as they wished for that purpose. They still occasionally bring them, and this with the natural increase keeps them provided with flesh."

"As it will us," suggested Bradley.

The first day they remained in hiding, eating only the dried food that Bradley had brought with him from the temple storeroom, and the next night they set out again up the river, continuing steadily on until almost dawn, when they came to low hills where the river wound through a gorge—it was little more than rivulet now, the water clear and cold and filled with fish similar to brook trout though much larger. Not wishing to leave the stream the two waded along its bed to a spot where the gorge widened between perpendicular bluffs to a wooded acre of level land. Here they stopped, for here also the stream ended. They had reached its source—many cold springs bubbling up from the center of a little natural amphitheater in the hills and forming a clear and beautiful pool overshadowed by trees upon one side and bounded by a little clearing upon the other.

With the coming of the sun they saw they had stumbled upon a place where they might remain hidden from the Wieroos for a long time and also one that they could de-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

fend against these winged creatures, since the trees would shield them from an attack from above and also hamper the movements of the creatures should they attempt to follow them into the wood.

For three days they rested here before trying to explore the neighboring country. On the fourth, Bradley stated that he was going to scale the bluffs and learn what lay beyond. He told the girl that she should remain in hiding; but she refused to be left, saying that whatever fate was to be his, she intended to share it, so that he was at last forced to permit her to come with him. Through woods at the summit of the bluff they made their way toward the north and had gone but a short distance when the wood ended and before them they saw the waters of the inland sea and dimly in the distance the coveted shore.

The beach lay some two hundred yards from the foot of the hill on which they stood, nor was there a tree nor any other form of shelter between them and the water as far up and down the coast as they could see. Among other plans Bradley had thought of constructing a covered raft upon which they might drift to the mainland; but as such a contrivance would necessarily be of considerable weight, it must be built in the water of the sea, since they could not hope to move it even a short distance overland.

“If this wood was only at the edge of the water,” he sighed.

“But it is not,” the girl reminded him, and then: “Let us make the best of it. We have escaped from death for a time at least. We have food and good water and peace and each other. What more could we have upon the mainland?”

“But I thought you wanted to get back to your own country!” he exclaimed.

She cast her eyes upon the ground and half turned away. “I do,” she said, “yet I am happy here. I could be little happier there.”

Bradley stood in silent thought. “We have food and good water and peace and each other!” he repeated to himself. He turned then and looked at the girl, and it was as though in the days that they had been together this was the first time that he had really seen her. The circumstances that had thrown them together, the dangers through which they had passed, all the weird and horrible surroundings that had formed the background of his knowledge of her had had their effect—she had been but the companion of an adventure; her self-reliance, her endurance, her loyalty, had been only what one man might expect of another, and he saw that he had unconsciously assumed an attitude toward her that he might have assumed toward a man. Yet there had been a difference—he recalled now the strange sensation of elation that had thrilled him upon the occasions when the girl had pressed his hand in hers, and the depression that had followed her announcement of her love for An-Tak.

He took a step toward her. A fierce yearning to seize her and crush her in his arms, swept over him, and then there flashed upon the screen of recollection the picture of a stately hall set amidst broad gardens and ancient trees and of a proud old man with beetling brows—an old man who held his head very high—and Bradley shook his head and turned away again.

They went back then to their little acre, and the days came and went, and the man fashioned spear and bow and arrows and hunted with them that they might have meat,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and he made hooks of fishbone and caught fishes with wondrous flies of his own invention; and the girl gathered fruits and cooked the flesh and the fish and made beds of branches and soft grasses. She cured the hides of the animals he killed and made them soft by much pounding. She made sandals for herself and for the man and fashioned a hide after the manner of those worn by the warriors of her tribe and made the man wear it, for his own garments were in rags.

She was always the same—sweet and kind and helpful—but always there was about her manner and her expression just a trace of wistfulness, and often she sat and looked at the man when he did not know it, her brows puckered in thought as though she were trying to fathom and to understand him.

In the face of the cliff, Bradley scooped a cave from the rotted granite of which the hill was composed, making a shelter for them against the rains. He brought wood for their cook-fire which they used only in the middle of the day—a time when there was little likelihood of Wieroos being in the air so far from their city—and then he learned to bank it with earth in such a way that the embers held until the following noon without giving off smoke.

Always he was planning on reaching the mainland, and never a day passed that he did not go to the top of the hill and look out across the sea toward the dark, distant line that meant for him comparative freedom and possibly reunion with his comrades. The girl always went with him, standing at his side and watching the stern expression on his face with just a tinge of sadness on her own.

“You are not happy,” she said once.

“I should be over there with my men,” he replied. “I do not know what may have happened to them.”

“I want you to be happy,” she said quite simply; “but I should be very lonely if you went away and left me here.”

He put his hand on her shoulder. “I would not do that, little girl,” he said gently. “If you cannot go with me, I shall not go. If either of us must go alone, it will be you.”

Her face lighted to a wondrous smile. “Then we shall not be separated,” she said, “for I shall never leave you as long as we both live.”

He looked down into her face for a moment and then: “Who was An-Tak?” he asked.

“My brother,” she replied. “Why?”

And then, even less than before, could he tell her. It was then that he did something he had never done before—he put his arms about her and stooping, kissed her forehead. “Until you find An-Tak, he said, “I will be your brother.”

She drew away. “I already have a brother,” she said, “and I do not want another.”

Chapter 5

Days became weeks, and weeks became months, and the months followed one another in a lazy procession of hot, humid days and warm, humid nights. The fugitives saw never a Wieroo by day though often at night they heard the melancholy flapping of giant wings far above them.

Each day was much like its predecessor. Bradley splashed about for a few minutes

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

in the cold pool early each morning and after a time the girl tried it and liked it. Toward the center it was deep enough for swimming, and so he taught her to swim—she was probably the first human being in all Caspak's long ages who had done this thing. And then while she prepared breakfast, the man shaved—this he never neglected. At first it was a source of wonderment to the girl, for the Galu men are beardless.

When they needed meat, he hunted, otherwise he busied himself in improving their shelter, making new and better weapons, perfecting his knowledge of the girl's language and teaching her to speak and to write English—anything that would keep them both occupied. He still sought new plans for escape, but with ever-lessening enthusiasm, since each new scheme presented some insurmountable obstacle.

And then one day as a bolt out of a clear sky came that which blasted the peace and security of their sanctuary forever. Bradley was just emerging from the water after his morning plunge when from overhead came the sound of flapping wings. Glancing quickly up the man saw a white-robed Wieroo circling slowly above him. That he had been discovered he could not doubt since the creature even dropped to a lower altitude as though to assure itself that what it saw was a man. Then it rose rapidly and winged away toward the city.

For two days Bradley and the girl lived in a constant state of apprehension, awaiting the moment when the hunters would come for them; but nothing happened until just after dawn of the third day, when the flapping of wings apprised them of the approach of Wieroos. Together they went to the edge of the wood and looked up to see five red-robed creatures dropping slowly in ever-lessening spirals toward their little amphitheater. With no attempt at concealment they came, sure of their ability to overwhelm these two fugitives, and with the fullest measure of self-confidence they landed in the clearing but a few yards from the man and the girl.

Following a plan already discussed Bradley and the girl retreated slowly into the woods. The Wieroos advanced, calling upon them to give themselves up; but the quarry made no reply. Farther and farther into the little wood Bradley led the hunters, permitting them to approach ever closer; then he circled back again toward the clearing, evidently to the great delight of the Wieroos, who now followed more leisurely, awaiting the moment when they should be beyond the trees and able to use their wings. They had opened into semicircular formation now with the evident intention of cutting the two off from returning into the wood. Each Wieroo advanced with his curved blade ready in his hand, each hideous face blank and expressionless.

It was then that Bradley opened fire with his pistol—three shots, aimed with careful deliberation, for it had been long since he had used the weapon, and he could not afford to chance wasting ammunition on misses. At each shot a Wieroo dropped; and then the remaining two sought escape by flight, screaming and wailing after the manner of their kind. When a Wieroo runs, his wings spread almost without any volition upon his part, since from time immemorial he has always used them to balance himself and accelerate his running speed so that in the open they appear to skim the surface of the ground when in the act of running. But here in the woods, among the close-set boles, the spreading of their wings proved their undoing—it hindered and stopped them and threw them to the ground, and then Bradley was upon them threatening them with instant death if they did

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

not surrender—promising them their freedom if they did his bidding.

“As you have seen,” he cried, “I can kill you when I wish and at a distance. You cannot escape me. Your only hope of life lies in obedience. Quick, or I kill!”

The Wieroos stopped and faced him. “What do you want of us?” asked one.

“Throw aside your weapons,” Bradley commanded. After a moment’s hesitation they obeyed.

“Now approach!” A great plan—the only plan—had suddenly come to him like an inspiration.

The Wieroos came closer and halted at his command. Bradley turned to the girl. “There is rope in the shelter,” he said. “Fetch it!”

She did as he bid, and then he directed her to fasten one end of a fifty-foot length to the ankle of one of the Wieroos and the opposite end to the second. The creatures gave evidence of great fear, but they dared not attempt to prevent the act.

“Now go out into the clearing,” said Bradley, “and remember that I am walking close behind and that I will shoot the nearer one should either attempt to escape—that will hold the other until I can kill him as well.”

In the open he halted them. “The girl will get upon the back of the one in front,” announced the Englishman. “I will mount the other. She carries a sharp blade, and I carry this weapon that you know kills easily at a distance. If you disobey in the slightest, the instructions that I am about to give you, you shall both die. That we must die with you, will not deter us. If you obey, I promise to set you free without harming you.

“You will carry us due west, depositing us upon the shore of the mainland—that is all. It is the price of your lives. Do you agree?”

Sullenly the Wieroos acquiesced. Bradley examined the knots that held the rope to their ankles, and feeling them secure directed the girl to mount the back of the leading Wieroo, himself upon the other. Then he gave the signal for the two to rise together. With loud flapping of the powerful wings the creatures took to the air, circling once before they topped the trees upon the hill and then taking a course due west out over the waters of the sea.

Nowhere about them could Bradley see signs of other Wieroos, nor of those other menaces which he had feared might bring disaster to his plans for escape—the huge, winged reptilia that are so numerous above the southern areas of Caspak and which are often seen, though in lesser numbers, farther north.

Nearer and nearer loomed the mainland—a broad, parklike expanse stretching inland to the foot of a low plateau spread out before them. The little dots in the foreground became grazing herds of deer and antelope and bos; a huge woolly rhinoceros wallowed in a mudhole to the right, and beyond, a mighty mammoth culled the tender shoots from a tall tree. The roars and screams and growls of giant carnivora came faintly to their ears. Ah, this was Caspak. With all of its dangers and its primal savagery it brought a fullness to the throat of the Englishman as to one who sees and hears the familiar sights and sounds of home after a long absence. Then the Wieroos dropped swiftly downward to the flower-starred turf that grew almost to the water’s edge, the fugitives slipped from their backs, and Bradley told the red-robed creatures they were free to go.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

When he had cut the ropes from their ankles they rose with that uncanny wailing upon their lips that always brought a shudder to the Englishman, and upon dismal wings they flapped away toward frightful Oo-oh.

When the creatures had gone, the girl turned toward Bradley. "Why did you have them bring us here?" she asked. "Now we are far from my country. We may never live to reach it, as we are among enemies who, while not so horrible will kill us just as surely as would the Wieroos should they capture us, and we have before us many marches through lands filled with savage beasts."

"There were two reasons," replied Bradley. "You told me that there are two Wieroo cities at the eastern end of the island. To have passed near either of them might have been to have brought about our heads hundreds of the creatures from whom we could not possibly have escaped. Again, my friends must be near this spot—it cannot be over two marches to the fort of which I have told you. It is my duty to return to them. If they still live we shall find a way to return you to your people."

"And you?" asked the girl.

"I escaped from Oo-oh," replied Bradley. "I have accomplished the impossible once, and so I shall accomplish it again—I shall escape from Caspak."

He was not looking at her face as he answered her, and so he did not see the shadow of sorrow that crossed her countenance. When he raised his eyes again, she was smiling.

"What you wish, I wish," said the girl.

Southward along the coast they made their way following the beach, where the walking was best, but always keeping close enough to trees to insure sanctuary from the beasts and reptiles that so often menaced them. It was late in the afternoon when the girl suddenly seized Bradley's arm and pointed straight ahead along the shore. "What is that?" she whispered. "What strange reptile is it?"

Bradley looked in the direction her slim forefinger indicated. He rubbed his eyes and looked again, and then he seized her wrist and drew her quickly behind a clump of bushes.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is the most frightful reptile that the waters of the world have ever known," he replied. "It is a German U-boat!"

An expression of amazement and understanding lighted her features. "It is the thing of which you told me," she exclaimed, "—the thing that swims under the water and carries men in its belly!"

"It is," replied Bradley.

"Then why do you hide from it?" asked the girl. "You said that now it belonged to your friends."

"Many months have passed since I knew what was going on among my friends," he replied. "I cannot know what has befallen them. They should have been gone from here in this vessel long since, and so I cannot understand why it is still here. I am going to investigate first before I show myself. When I left, there were more Germans on the U-33

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

than there were men of my own party at the fort, and I have had sufficient experience of Germans to know that they will bear watching—if they have not been properly watched since I left.”

Making their way through a fringe of wood that grew a few yards inland the two crept unseen toward the U-boat which lay moored to the shore at a point which Bradley now recognized as being near the oil-pool north of Dinosaur. As close as possible to the vessel they halted, crouching low among the dense vegetation, and watched the boat for signs of human life about it. The hatches were closed—no one could be seen or heard. For five minutes Bradley watched, and then he determined to board the submarine and investigate. He had risen to carry his decision into effect when there suddenly broke upon his ear, uttered in loud and menacing tones, a volley of German oaths and expletives among which he heard *Englische schweinhunde* repeated several times. The voice did not come from the direction of the U-boat; but from inland. Creeping forward Bradley reached a spot where, through the creepers hanging from the trees, he could see a party of men coming down toward the shore.

He saw Baron Friedrich von Schoenvorts and six of his men—all armed—while marching in a little knot among them were Olson, Brady, Sinclair, Wilson, and Whitely.

Bradley knew nothing of the disappearance of Bowen Tyler and Miss La Rue, nor of the perfidy of the Germans in shelling the fort and attempting to escape in the U-33; but he was in no way surprised at what he saw before him.

The little party came slowly onward, the prisoners staggering beneath heavy cans of oil, while Schwartz, one of the German noncommissioned officers cursed and beat them with a stick of wood, impartially. Von Schoenvorts walked in the rear of the column, encouraging Schwartz and laughing at the discomfiture of the Britishers. Dietz, Heinz, and Klatz also seemed to enjoy the entertainment immensely; but two of the men—Plesser and Hindle—marched with eyes straight to the front and with scowling faces.

Bradley felt his blood boil at sight of the cowardly indignities being heaped upon his men, and in the brief span of time occupied by the column to come abreast of where he lay hidden he made his plans, foolhardy though he knew them. Then he drew the girl close to him. “Stay here,” he whispered. “I am going out to fight those beasts; but I shall be killed. Do not let them see you. Do not let them take you alive. They are more cruel, more cowardly, more bestial than the Wieroos.”

The girl pressed close to him, her face very white. “Go, if that is right,” she whispered; “but if you die, I shall die, for I cannot live without you.” He looked sharply into her eyes. “Oh!” he ejaculated. “What an idiot I have been! Nor could I live without you, little girl.” And he drew her very close and kissed her lips. “Good-bye.” He disengaged himself from her arms and looked again in time to see that the rear of the column had just passed him. Then he rose and leaped quickly and silently from the jungle.

Suddenly von Schoenvorts felt an arm thrown about his neck and his pistol jerked from its holster. He gave a cry of fright and warning, and his men turned to see a half-naked white man holding their leader securely from behind and aiming a pistol at them over his shoulder.

“Drop those guns!” came in short, sharp syllables and perfect German from the lips

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of the newcomer. "Drop them or I'll put a bullet through the back of von Schoenvorts' head."

The Germans hesitated for a moment, looking first toward von Schoenvorts and then to Schwartz, who was evidently second in command, for orders.

"It's the English pig, Bradley," shouted the latter, "and he's alone—go and get him!"

"Go yourself," growled Plesser. Hindle moved close to the side of Plesser and whispered something to him. The latter nodded. Suddenly von Schoenvorts wheeled about and seized Bradley's pistol arm with both hands, "Now!" he shouted. "Come and take him, quick!"

Schwartz and three others leaped forward; but Plesser and Hindle held back, looking questioningly toward the English prisoners. Then Plesser spoke. "Now is your chance, Englander," he called in low tones. "Seize Hindle and me and take our guns from us—we will not fight hard."

Olson and Brady were not long in acting upon the suggestion. They had seen enough of the brutal treatment von Schoenvorts accorded his men and the especially venomous attentions he had taken great enjoyment in according Plesser and Hindle to understand that these two might be sincere in a desire for revenge. In another moment the two Germans were unarmed and Olson and Brady were running to the support of Bradley; but already it seemed too late.

Von Schoenvorts had managed to drag the Englishman around so that his back was toward Schwartz and the other advancing Germans. Schwartz was almost upon Bradley with gun clubbed and ready to smash down upon the Englishman's skull. Brady and Olson were charging the Germans in the rear with Wilson, Whitely, and Sinclair supporting them with bare fists. It seemed that Bradley was doomed when, apparently out of space, an arrow whizzed, striking Schwartz in the side, passing half-way through his body to crumple him to earth. With a shriek the man fell, and at the same time Olson and Brady saw the slim figure of a young girl standing at the edge of the jungle coolly fitting another arrow to her bow.

Bradley had now succeeded in wrestling his arm free from von Schoenvorts' grip and in dropping the latter with a blow from the butt of his pistol. The rest of the English and Germans were engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter. Plesser and Hindle standing aside from the melee and urging their comrades to surrender and join with the English against the tyranny of von Schoenvorts. Heinz and Klatz, possibly influenced by their exhortation, were putting up but a halfhearted resistance; but Dietz, a huge, bearded, bullnecked Prussian, yelling like a maniac, sought to exterminate the Englische schweinhunde with his bayonet, fearing to fire his piece lest he kill some of his comrades.

It was Olson who engaged him, and though unused to the long German rifle and bayonet, he met the bullrush of the Hun with the cold, cruel precision and science of English bayonet-fighting. There was no fainting, no retiring and no parrying that was not also an attack. Bayonet-fighting today is not a pretty thing to see—it is not an artistic fencing-match in which men give and take—it is slaughter inevitable and quickly over.

Dietz lunged once madly at Olson's throat. A short point, with just a twist of the bayo-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

net to the left sent the sharp blade over the Englishman's left shoulder. Instantly he stepped close in, dropped his rifle through his hands and grasped it with both hands close below the muzzle and with a short, sharp jab sent his blade up beneath Dietz's chin to the brain. So quickly was the thing done and so quick the withdrawal that Olson had wheeled to take on another adversary before the German's corpse had toppled to the ground.

But there were no more adversaries to take on. Heinz and Klatz had thrown down their rifles and with hands above their heads were crying "Kamerad! Kamerad!" at the tops of their voices. Von Schoenvorts still lay where he had fallen. Plesser and Hindle were explaining to Bradley that they were glad of the outcome of the fight, as they could no longer endure the brutality of the U-boat commander.

The remainder of the men were looking at the girl who now advanced slowly, her bow ready, when Bradley turned toward her and held out his hand.

"Co-Tan," he said, "unstring your bow—these are my friends, and yours." And to the Englishmen: "This is Co-Tan. You who saw her save me from Schwartz know a part of what I owe her."

The rough men gathered about the girl, and when she spoke to them in broken English, with a smile upon her lips enhancing the charm of her irresistible accent, each and every one of them promptly fell in love with her and constituted himself henceforth her guardian and her slave.

A moment later the attention of each was called to Plesser by a volley of invective. They turned in time to see the man running toward von Schoenvorts who was just rising from the ground. Plesser carried a rifle with bayonet fixed, that he had snatched from the side of Dietz's corpse. Von Schoenvorts' face was livid with fear, his jaws working as though he would call for help; but no sound came from his blue lips.

"You struck me," shrieked Plesser. "Once, twice, three times, you struck me, pig. You murdered Schwerke—you drove him insane by your cruelty until he took his own life. You are only one of your kind—they are all like you from the Kaiser down. I wish that you were the Kaiser. Thus would I do!" And he lunged his bayonet through von Schoenvorts' chest. Then he let his rifle fall with the dying man and wheeled toward Bradley. "Here I am," he said. "Do with me as you like. All my life I have been kicked and cuffed by such as that, and yet always have I gone out when they commanded, singing, to give up my life if need be to keep them in power. Only lately have I come to know what a fool I have been. But now I am no longer a fool, and besides, I am avenged and Schwerke is avenged, so you can kill me if you wish. Here I am."

"If I was after bein' the king," said Olson, "I'd pin the V.C. on your noble chist; but bein' only an Irishman with a Swede name, for which God forgive me, the bist I can do is shake your hand."

"You will not be punished," said Bradley. "There are four of you left—if you four want to come along and work with us, we will take you; but you will come as prisoners."

"It suits me," said Plesser. "Now that the captain-lieutenant is dead you need not fear us. All our lives we have known nothing but to obey his class. If I had not killed him, I suppose I would be fool enough to obey him again; but he is dead. Now we will obey you—we must obey some one."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"And you?" Bradley turned to the other survivors of the original crew of the U-33. Each promised obedience.

The two dead Germans were buried in a single grave, and then the party boarded the submarine and stowed away the oil.

Here Bradley told the men what had befallen him since the night of September 14th when he had disappeared so mysteriously from the camp upon the plateau. Now he learned for the first time that Bowen

J. Tyler, Jr., and Miss La Rue had been missing even longer than he and that no faintest trace of them had been discovered.

Olson told him of how the Germans had returned and waited in ambush for them outside the fort, capturing them that they might be used to assist in the work of refining the oil and later in manning the U-33, and Plesser told briefly of the experiences of the German crew under von Schoenvorts since they had escaped from Caspak months before—of how they lost their bearings after having been shelled by ships they had attempted to sneak farther north and how at last with provisions gone and fuel almost exhausted they had sought and at last found, more by accident than design, the mysterious island they had once been so glad to leave behind.

"Now," announced Bradley, "we'll plan for the future. The boat has fuel, provisions and water for a month, I believe you said, Plesser; there are ten of us to man it. We have a last sad duty here—we must search for Miss La Rue and Mr. Tyler. I say a sad duty because we know that we shall not find them; but it is none the less our duty to comb the shoreline, firing signal shells at intervals, that we at least may leave at last with full knowledge that we have done all that men might do to locate them."

None dissented from this conviction, nor was there a voice raised in protest against the plan to at least make assurance doubly sure before quitting Caspak forever.

And so they started, cruising slowly up the coast and firing an occasional shot from the gun. Often the vessel was brought to a stop, and always there were anxious eyes scanning the shore for an answering signal. Late in the afternoon they caught sight of a number of Band-lu warriors; but when the vessel approached the shore and the natives realized that human beings stood upon the back of the strange monster of the sea, they fled in terror before Bradley could come within hailing distance.

That night they dropped anchor at the mouth of a sluggish stream whose warm waters swarmed with millions of tiny tadpolelike organisms—minute human spawn starting on their precarious journey from some inland pool toward "the beginning"—a journey which one in millions, perhaps, might survive to complete. Already almost at the inception of life they were being greeted by thousands of voracious mouths as fish and reptiles of many kinds fought to devour them, the while other and larger creatures pursued the devourers, to be, in turn, preyed upon by some other of the countless forms that inhabit the deeps of Caprona's frightful sea.

The second day was practically a repetition of the first. They moved very slowly with frequent stops and once they landed in the Kro-lu country to hunt. Here they were attacked by the bow-andarrow men, whom they could not persuade to palaver with them. So belligerent were the natives that it became necessary to fire into them in order to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

escape their persistent and ferocious attentions.

"What chance," asked Bradley, as they were returning to the boat with their game, "could Tyler and Miss La Rue have had among such as these?"

But they continued on their fruitless quest, and the third day, after cruising along the shore of a deep inlet, they passed a line of lofty cliffs that formed the southern shore of the inlet and rounded a sharp promontory about noon. Co-Tan and Bradley were on deck alone, and as the new shoreline appeared beyond the point, the girl gave an exclamation of joy and seized the man's hand in hers.

"Oh, look!" she cried. "The Galu country! The Galu country! It is my country that I never thought to see again."

"You are glad to come again, Co-Tan?" asked Bradley.

"Oh, so glad!" she cried. "And you will come with me to my people? We may live here among them, and you will be a great warrior—oh, when Jor dies you may even be chief, for there is none so mighty as my warrior. You will come?"

Bradley shook his head. "I cannot, little Co-Tan," he answered. "My country needs me, and I must go back. Maybe someday I shall return. You will not forget me, Co-Tan?"

She looked at him in wide-eyed wonder. "You are going away from me?" she asked in a very small voice. "You are going away from Co-Tan?"

Bradley looked down upon the little bowed head. He felt the soft cheek against his bare arm; and he felt something else there too—hot drops of moisture that ran down to his very finger-tips and splashed, but each one wrung from a woman's heart.

He bent low and raised the tear-stained face to his own. "No, Co-Tan," he said, "I am not going away from you—for you are going with me. You are going back to my own country to be my wife. Tell me that you will, Co-Tan." And he bent still lower yet from his height and kissed her lips. Nor did he need more than the wonderful new light in her eyes to tell him that she would go to the end of the world with him if he would but take her. And then the gun-crew came up from below again to fire a signal shot, and the two were brought down from the high heaven of their new happiness to the scarred and weather-beaten deck of the U-33.

An hour later the vessel was running close in by a shore of wondrous beauty beside a parklike meadow that stretched back a mile inland to the foot of a plateau when Whitely called attention to a score of figures clambering downward from the elevation to the lowland below. The engines were reversed and the boat brought to a stop while all hands gathered on deck to watch the little party coming toward them across the meadow.

"They are Galus," cried Co-Tan; "they are my own people. Let me speak to them lest they think we come to fight them. Put me ashore, my man, and I will go meet them."

The nose of the U-boat was run close in to the steep bank; but when Co-Tan would have run forward alone, Bradley seized her hand and held her back. "I will go with you, Co-Tan," he said; and together they advanced to meet the oncoming party.

There were about twenty warriors moving forward in a thin line, as our infantry advance as skirmishers. Bradley could not but notice the marked difference between this formation and the moblike methods of the lower tribes he had come in contact with, and he commented upon it to Co-Tan.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Galu warriors always advance into battle thus," she said. "The lesser people remain in a huddled group where they can scarce use their weapons the while they present so big a mark to us that our spears and arrows cannot miss them; but when they hurl theirs at our warriors, if they miss the first man, there is no chance that they will kill some one behind him.

"Stand still now," she cautioned, "and fold your arms. They will not harm us then."

Bradley did as he was bid, and the two stood with arms folded as the line of warriors approached. When they had come within some fifty yards, they halted and one spoke. "Who are you and from whence do you come?" he asked; and then Co-Tan gave a little, glad cry and sprang forward with out-stretched arms.

"Oh, Tan!" she exclaimed. "Do you not know your little Co-Tan?"

The warrior stared, incredulous, for a moment, and then he, too, ran forward and when they met, took the girl in his arms. It was then that Bradley experienced to the full a sensation that was new to him—a sudden hatred for the strange warrior before him and a desire to kill without knowing why he would kill. He moved quickly to the girl's side and grasped her wrist.

"Who is this man?" he demanded in cold tones.

Co-Tan turned a surprised face toward the Englishman and then of a sudden broke forth into a merry peal of laughter. "This is my father, Brad-lee," she cried.

"And who is Brad-lee?" demanded the warrior.

"He is my man," replied Co-Tan simply.

"By what right?" insisted Tan.

And then she told him briefly of all that she had passed through since the Wieroos had stolen her and of how Bradley had rescued her and sought to rescue An-Tak, her brother.

"You are satisfied with him?" asked Tan.

"Yes," replied the girl proudly.

It was then that Bradley's attention was attracted to the edge of the plateau by a movement there, and looking closely he saw a horse bearing two figures sliding down the steep declivity. Once at the bottom, the animal came charging across the meadowland at a rapid run. It was a magnificent animal—a great bay stallion with a white-blazed face and white forelegs to the knees, its barrel encircled by a broad surcingle of white; and as it came to a sudden stop beside Tan, the Englishman saw that it bore a man and a girl—a tall man and a girl as beautiful as Co-Tan. When the girl espied the latter, she slid from the horse and ran toward her, fairly screaming for joy.

The man dismounted and stood beside Tan.

Like Bradley he was garbed after the fashion of the surrounding warriors; but there was a subtle difference between him and his companion. Possibly he detected a similar difference in Bradley, for his first question was, "From what country?" and though he spoke in Galu Bradley thought he detected an accent.

"England," replied Bradley.

A broad smile lighted the newcomer's face as he held out his hand. "I am Tom Bill-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ings of Santa Monica, California,” he said. “I know all about you, and I’m mighty glad to find you alive.”

“How did you get here?” asked Bradley. “I thought ours was the only party of men from the outer world ever to enter Caprona.”

“It was, until we came in search of Bowen J. Tyler, Jr.,” replied Billings. “We found him and sent him home with his bride; but I was kept a prisoner here.”

Bradley’s face darkened—then they were not among friends after all. “There are ten of us down there on a German sub with small-arms and a gun,” he said quickly in English. “It will be no trick to get away from these people.”

“You don’t know my jailer,” replied Billings, “or you’d not be so sure. Wait, I’ll introduce you.” And then turning to the girl who had accompanied him he called her by name. “Ajour,” he said, “permit me to introduce Lieutenant Bradley; Lieutenant, Mrs. Billings—my jailer!”

The Englishman laughed as he shook hands with the girl. “You are not as good a soldier as I,” he said to Billings. “Instead of being taken prisoner myself I have taken one—Mrs. Bradley, this is Mr. Billings.”

Ajour, quick to understand, turned toward Co-Tan. “You are going back with him to his country?” she asked. Co-Tan admitted it.

“You dare?” asked Ajour. “But your father will not permit it—Jor, my father, High Chief of the Galus, will not permit it, for like me you are cosata-lo. Oh, Co-Tan, if we but could! How I would love to see all the strange and wonderful things of which my Tom tells me!”

Bradley bent and whispered in her ear. “Say the word and you may both go with us.”

Billings heard and speaking in English, asked Ajour if she would go.

“Yes,” she answered, “If you wish it; but you know, my Tom, that if Jor captures us, both you and Co-Tan’s man will pay the penalty with your lives—not even his love for me nor his admiration for you can save you.”

Bradley noticed that she spoke in English—broken English like Co-Tan’s but equally appealing. “We can easily get you aboard the ship,” he said, “on some pretext or other, and then we can steam away. They can neither harm nor detain us, nor will we have to fire a shot at them.”

And so it was done, Bradley and Co-Tan taking Ajour and Billings aboard to “show” them the vessel, which almost immediately raised anchor and moved slowly out into the sea.

“I hate to do it,” said Billings. “They have been fine to me. Jor and Tan are splendid men and they will think me an ingrate; but I can’t waste my life here when there is so much to be done in the outer world.”

As they steamed down the inland sea past the island of Oo-oh, the stories of their adventures were retold, and Bradley learned that Bowen Tyler and his bride had left the Galu country but a fortnight before and that there was every reason to believe that the Toreador might still be lying in the Pacific not far off the subterranean mouth of the river

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

which emitted Caprona's heated waters into the ocean.

Late in the second day, after running through swarms of hideous reptiles, they submerged at the point where the river entered beneath the cliffs and shortly after rose to the sunlit surface of the Pacific; but nowhere as far as they could see was sign of another craft. Down the coast they steamed toward the beach where Billings had made his crossing in the hydro-aeroplane and just at dusk the lookout announced a light dead ahead. It proved to be aboard the Toreador, and a half-hour later there was such a reunion on the deck of the trig little yacht as no one there had ever dreamed might be possible. Of the Allies there were only Tippet and James to be mourned, and no one mourned any of the Germans dead nor Benson, the traitor, whose ugly story was first told in Bowen Tyler's manuscript.

Tyler and the rescue party had but just reached the yacht that afternoon. They had heard, faintly, the signal shots fired by the U-33 but had been unable to locate their direction and so had assumed that they had come from the guns of the Toreador.

It was a happy party that sailed north toward sunny, southern California, the old U-33 trailing in the wake of the Toreador and flying with the latter the glorious Stars and Stripes beneath which she had been born in the shipyard at Santa Monica. Three newly married couples, their bonds now duly solemnized by the master of the ship, joyed in the peace and security of the untracked waters of the south Pacific and the unique honeymoon which, had it not been for stern duty ahead, they could have wished protracted till the end of time.

And so they came one day to dock at the shipyard which Bowen Tyler now controlled, and here the U33 still lies while those who passed so many eventful days within and because of her, have gone their various ways.

THE ETERNAL noonday sun of Pellucidar looked down upon such a scene as the outer crust of earth may not have witnessed for countless ages past, such a scene as only the inner world of the earth's core may produce today.

Hundreds of saber-toothed tigers were driving countless herbivorous animals into a clearing in a giant forest; and two white men from the outer crust were there to see, two white men and a handful of black warriors from far distant Africa.

The men had come in a giant dirigible with others of their kind through the north polar opening at the top of the world at the urgent behest of Jason Gridley, but that is a story that has been once told.

This is the story of the one who was lost.

"It doesn't seem possible," exclaimed Gridley, "that five hundred miles below our feet automobiles are dashing through crowded streets lined by enormous buildings; that there the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio are so commonplace as to excite no comment; that countless thousands live out their entire lives without ever having to use a weapon in self-defense, and yet at the same instant we stand here facing saber-toothed tigers in surroundings that may not have existed upon the outer crust since a million years."

"Look at them!" exclaimed von Horst. "Look at what they've driven into this clearing

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

already, and more corning."

There were great ox-like creatures with shaggy coats and widespreading horns. There were red deer and sloths of gigantic size. There were mastodons and mammoths, and a huge, elephantine creature that resembled an elephant and yet did not seem to be an elephant at all. Its great head was four feet long and three feet broad. It had a short, powerful trunk and from its lower jaw mighty tusks curved downward, their points bending inward toward the body. At the shoulder it stood at least ten feet above the ground, and in length it must have been fully twenty feet. But what resemblance it bore to an elephant was lessened by its small, pig-like ears.

The two white men, momentarily forgetting the tigers behind them in their amazement at the sight ahead, halted and looked with wonder upon the huge gathering of creatures within the clearing. But it soon became apparent that if they were to escape with their lives they must reach the safety of the trees before they were either dragged down by the sabertooths or trampled to death by the frightened herbivores which were already milling around looking for an avenue of escape.

"There is still one opening ahead of us, bwana," said Muviro, the black chief of the Waziri.

"We shall have to run for it," said Gridley. "The beasts are all headed in our direction now. Give them a volley, and then beat it for the trees. If they charge, it will be every man for himself."

The volley turned them back for an instant; but when they saw the great cats behind them, they wheeled about once more in the direction of the men.

"Here they come!" cried von Horst. Then the men broke into a run as they sought to reach the trees that offered the only sanctuary.

Gridley was bowled over by a huge sloth; then he scrambled to his feet just in time to leap from the path, of a fleeing mastodon and reach a tree just as the main body of the stampeding herd closed about it. A moment later, temporarily safe among the branches, he looked about for his companions; but none was in sight, nor could any living thing so puny as man have remained alive beneath that solid mass of leaping, plunging, terrified beasts. Some of his fellows, he felt sure, might have reached the forest in safety; but he feared for von Horst, who had been some little distance in rear of the Waziri. But Lieutenant Wilhelm von Horst had escaped. In fact, he had succeeded in running some little distance into the forest without having to take to the trees. He had borne off to the right away from the escaping animals, which had veered to the left after they entered the forest. He could hear them thundering away in the distance, squealing and trumpeting, grunting and bellowing.

Winded and almost exhausted, he sat down at the foot of a tree to catch his breath and rest. He was very tired, and just for a moment he closed his eyes. The sun was directly overhead. When he opened his eyes again the sun was still directly overhead. He realized that he had dozed, but he thought that it had been for but an instant. He did not know that he had slept for a long time. How long, who may say? For how may time be measured in this timeless world whose stationary sun hangs eternally motionless at zenith?

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The forest was strangely silent. No longer did he hear the trumpeting and squealing of the herbivores or the growls and snarls of the cats. He called aloud to attract the attention of his friends, but there was no response; then he set out in search of them, taking what he thought was a direct route back toward the main camp where the dirigible was moored and toward which he knew they would be sure to go. But instead of going north, as he should have done, he went west.

Perhaps it was just as well that he did, for presently he heard voices. He stopped and listened.

Men were approaching. He heard them distinctly, but he could not recognize their language. They might be friendly; but, in this savage world, he doubted it. He stepped from the trail he had been following and concealed himself behind a clump of bushes, and a moment later the men that he had heard came into view. They were Muviro and his warriors. They were speaking the dialect of their own African tribe. At sight of them von Horst stepped into the trail. They were as glad to see him as he was to see them. Now if they could but find Gridley they would be happy; but they did not find him, though they searched for a long time.

Muviro knew no better than von Horst where they were or the direction of camp; and he and his warriors were much chagrined to think that they, the Waziri, could be lost in any forest. As they compared notes it seemed evident that each had made a large circle in opposite directions after they had separated. Only thus could they account for their coming together face to face as they had, since each insisted that he had not at any time retraced his steps.

The Waziri had not slept, and they were very tired. Von Horst, on the contrary had slept and was rested; so, when they found a cave that would give them all shelter, the Waziri went in where it was dark and slept while von Horst sat on the ground at the mouth of the cave and tried to plan for the future. As he sat there quietly a large boar passed; and, knowing that they would require meat, the man rose and stalked it. It had disappeared around a curve in the trail; but though he thought that he was close behind it he never seemed to be able to catch sight of it again, and there was such a patchwork of trails crossing and crisscrossing that he was soon confused and started back toward the cave.

He had walked a considerable distance before he realized that he was lost. He called Muviro's name aloud, but there was no response; then he stopped and tried very carefully to figure out in what direction the cave must be. He looked up at the sun mechanically, as though it might help him. It hung at zenith. How could he plot a course where there were no stars but only a sun that hung perpetually straight above one's head? He swore under his breath and set out again. He could only do his best.

For what seemed a very long time he plodded on, but it was still noon. Often, mechanically, he glanced up at the sun, the sun that gave him no bearings nor any hint of the lapse of time, until he came to hate the shining orb that seemed to mock him. The forest and the jungle teemed with life. Fruits and flowers and nuts grew in profusion. He never need lack for a variety of food if he but knew which he might safely eat and which he might not. He was very hungry and thirsty, and it was the latter that worried him most. He had a pistol and plenty of ammunition. In this lush game country he could always pro-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

vide himself with meat, but he must have water. He pushed on. It was water that he was looking for now more than for his companions or for camp. He commenced to suffer from thirst, and he became very tired again and sleepy. He shot a large rodent and drank its blood; then he made a fire and cooked the carcass. It was only half cooked beneath the surface which was charred in places. Lieutenant Wilhelm von Horst was a man accustomed to excellent food properly prepared and served, but he tore at the carcass of his unsavory kill like a famished wolf and thought that no meal had ever tasted more delicious. He did not know how long he had been without food. Now he slept again, this time in a tree; for he had caught a glimpse of a great beast through the foliage of the jungle, a beast with enormous fangs and blazing eyes.

Again, when he awoke, he did not know how long he had slept; but the fact that he was entirely rested suggested that it had been a long time. He felt that it was entirely possible in a world where there was no time that a man might sleep a day or a week. How was one to know? The thought intrigued him. He commenced to wonder how long he had been away from the dirigible. Only the fact that he had not quenched his thirst since he had been separated from his comrades suggested that it could not have been but a day or two, though now he was actually suffering for water. It was all that he could think of. He started off in search of it. He must have water! If he didn't he would die—die here alone in this terrible forest, his last resting place forever unknown to any human being. Von Horst was a social animal; and, as such, this idea was repugnant to him. He was not afraid to die; but this seemed such an entirely futile end—and he was very young, still in his twenties.

He was following a game trail. There were many of them; they crossed and criss-crossed all through the forest. Some of them must lead to water; but which one? He had chosen the one he was following because it was broader and more plainly marked than the others. Many beasts had passed along it and, perhaps, for an incalculable time, for it was worn deep; and von Horst reasoned that more animals would follow a trail that led to water than would follow any other trail. He was right. When he came to a little river, he gave a cry of delight and ran to it and threw himself face down upon the bank. He drank in great gulps. Perhaps it should have harmed him, but it did not. It was a clean little river that ran among boulders over a gravelly bottom, a gem of a river that carried on its bosom to the forest and the lowlands the freshness and the coolness and the beauty of the mountains that gave it birth. Von Horst buried his face in the water, he let it purl over his bare arms, he cupped his hands and dipped it up and poured it over his head, he revelled in it. He felt that he had never known a luxury so rare, so desirable. His troubles vanished. Everything would be all right now—he had water! Now he was safe!

He looked up. Upon the opposite bank of the little river squatted such a creature as was never in any book, the bones of which were never in any museum. It resembled a gigantic winged kangaroo with the head of a reptile, pterodactyl-like in its long, heavily fanged jaws. It was watching von Horst intently, its cold, reptilian, lidless eyes staring at him expressionlessly. There was something terribly menacing in its fixed gaze. The man started to rise slowly; then the hideous thing came to sudden life. With a hissing scream it cleared the little river in a single mighty bound. Von Horst turned to run, meanwhile tugging at the pistol in his holster; but before he could draw it, before he could escape,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the thing pounced upon him and bore him to earth; then it picked him up in claw-like hands and held him out and surveyed him. Sitting erect upon its broad tail it towered fifteen feet in height, and at close range its jaws seemed almost large enough to engulf the puny man-thing that gazed in awe upon them. Von Horst thought that his end had come. He was helpless in the powerful grip of those mighty talons, beneath one of which his pistol hand was pinned to his side. The creature seemed to be gloating over him, debating, apparently, where to take the first bite; or at least so it seemed to von Horst.

At the point where the stream crossed the trail there was an opening in the leafy canopy of the forest, through which the eternal noonday sun cast its brilliant rays upon the rippling water, the green sward, the monstrous creature, and its relatively puny captive. The reptile, if such it were, turned its cold eyes upward toward the opening; then it leaped high into the air, and as it did so it spread its wings and flapped dismally upward.

Von Horst was cold with apprehension. He recalled stories he had read of some great bird of the outer crust that carried its prey aloft and then killed it by letting it fall to the ground. He wondered if this were to be his fate, and he thanked his Maker that there would be so few to mourn him—no wife nor children to be left without protector and provider, no sweetheart to mourn his loss, pining for the lover who would never return.

They were above the forest now. The strange, horizon-less landscape stretched away in all directions, fading gradually into nothingness as it passed from the range of human vision. Beyond the forest, in the direction of the creature's flight, lay open country, rolling hills, and mountains. Von Horst could see rivers and lakes and, in the far, hazy distance, what appeared to be a great body of water—an inland sea, perhaps, or a vast, uncharted ocean; but in whatever direction he might look lay mystery.

His situation was not one that rendered the contemplation of scenery a factor of vital interest, but presently whatever interest he had in it was definitely wiped out. The thing that carried him suddenly relinquished its hold with one paw. Von Horst thought that it was going to drop him, that the end had come. He breathed a little prayer. The creature raised him a few feet and then lowered him into a dark, odorous pocket which it held open with its other paw. When it released its hold upon him, von Horst was in utter darkness. For an instant he was at a loss to explain his situation; then it dawned upon him that he was in the belly pouch of a marsupial. It was hot and stifling. He thought he would suffocate, and the reptilian stench was almost overpowering. When he could endure it no longer he pushed himself upward until his head protruded from the mouth of the pouch.

The creature was flying horizontally by now, and the man's view was restricted to what lay almost directly beneath. They were still over the forest. The foliage, lying like billowed clouds of emerald, looked soft and inviting. Von Horst wondered why he was being carried away alive and whither. Doubtless to some nest or lair to serve as food, perhaps for a brood of hideous young. He fingered his pistol. How easy it would be to fire into that hot, pulsing body; but what would it profit him? It would mean almost certain death—possibly a lingering death if he were not instantly killed, for the only alternative to that would be fatal injuries. He abandoned the thought.

The creature was flying at surprising speed, considering its size. The forest passed from view; and they sped out over a tree-dotted plain where the man saw countless ani-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

imals grazing or resting. There were great red deer, sloths, enormous primitive cattle with shaggy coats; and near clumps of bamboo that bordered a river was a herd of mammoths. There were other animals, too, that von Horst was unable to classify. Presently they flew above low hills, leaving the plain behind, and then over a rough, volcanic country of barren, black, cone-shaped hills. Between the cones and part way up their sides rioted the inevitable tropical verdure of Pellucidar. Only where no root could find a foothold was there no growth. One peculiar feature of these cones attracted von Horst's attention; there was an opening in the top of many of them, giving them the appearance of miniature extinct volcanoes. They ranged in size from a hundred feet to several hundred in height. As he was contemplating them, his captor commenced to circle directly above one of the larger cones; then it dropped rapidly directly into the yawning crater, alighting on the floor in the shaft of light from the sun hanging perpetually at zenith.

As the creature dragged him from its pouch, von Horst could, at first, see little of the interior of the crater; but as his eyes quickly became accustomed to the surrounding gloom he saw what appeared to be the dead bodies of many animals and men laid in a great circle around the periphery of the hollow cone, their heads outward from the center. The circle was not entirely completed, there being a single gap of several yards. Between the heads of the bodies and the wall of the cone was stacked a quantity of ivory colored spheres about two feet in diameter.

These things von Horst observed in a brief glance; then he was interrupted by being lifted into the air. The creature raised him, faced out, until his head was about on a level with its own; then the man felt a sharp, sickening pain in the back of his neck at the base of the brain. There was just an instant of pain and momentary nausea; then a sudden fading of all feeling. It was as though he had died from the neck down. Now he was aware of being carried toward the wall of the cone and of being deposited upon the floor. He could still see; and when he tried to turn his head, he found that he could do so. He watched the creature that had brought him here leap into the air, spread its wings, and flap dismally away through the mouth of the crater.

As VON HORST, lying there in that gloomy cavern of death, contemplated his situation, he wished that he had died when he had had the opportunity and the power for self-destruction. Now he was helpless. The horror of his situation grew on him until he feared that he should go mad. He tried to move a hand, but it was as though he had no hands. He could not feel them, nor any other part of his body below his neck. He seemed just a head lying in the dirt, conscious but helpless. He rolled his head to one side. He had been placed at the end of the row of bodies at one side of the gap that had been left in the circle. Across the gap from him lay the body of a man. He turned his head in the other direction and saw that he was lying close to the body of another man; then his attention was attracted by, a cracking and pounding in the opposite direction. Again he rolled his head so that he could see what lived in this hall of the dead.

His eyes were attracted to one of the ivory colored spheres that lay almost directly behind the body at the far side of the gap. The sphere was jerking to and fro. The sounds seemed to be coming from its interior. They became louder, more insistent. The sphere bobbed and rolled about; then a crack appeared in it, a jagged hole was torn in its surface, and a head protruded. It was a miniature of the hideous head of the creature that

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

had brought him here. Now the mystery of the spheres was solved—they were the eggs of the great marsupial reptile; but what of the bodies?

Von Horst, fascinated, watched the terrible little creature burst its way from its egg. At last, successful, it rolled out upon the floor of the crater, where it lay inert for some time, as though resting after its exertions. Then it commenced to move its limbs, tentatively trying them. Presently it rose to its four feet; then it sat upright upon its tail and spread its wings. It flapped them at first weakly, then vigorously for a moment. This done, it fell upon its discarded shell and devoured it. The shell gone, it turned without hesitation toward the body of the man at the far side of the gap. As it approached it, von Horst was horrified to see the head turn toward the creature, the eyes wide with terror. With a hissing roar the foul little creature leaped upon the body, and simultaneously a piercing scream of terror burst from the lips of the man von Horst had thought was dead. The horror-filled eyes, the contorted muscles of the face reflected the mad efforts of the brain to direct the paralyzed nerve centers, to force them to react to the will to escape. So obvious was the effort to burst the invisible bonds that held him that it seemed inevitable that he must succeed, but the paralysis was too complete to be overcome.

The hideous fledgling fell upon the body and commenced to devour it; and though the victim may have felt no pain, his screams and groans continued to reverberate within the hollow cone of horror until, presently, the other creatures awaiting, doubtless, a similar fate raised their voices in a bloodcurdling cacophony of terror. Now, for the first time, von Horst realized that all of these creatures were alive, paralyzed as he was. He closed his eyes to shut out the gruesome sight, but he could not close his ears to the abominable, soul-searing din.

Presently he turned his head away from the feeding reptile, toward the man lying upon his right, and opened his eyes. He saw that the man had not joined in the frightful chorus and that he was regarding him through steady, appraising eyes. He was a young man with a shock of coal-black hair, fine eyes, and regular features. He had an air about him, an air of strength and quiet dignity, that attracted von Horst; and he was favorably impressed, too, because the man had not succumbed to the hysteria of terror that had seized the other inmates of the chamber. The young lieutenant smiled at him and nodded. For an instant a faint expression of surprise tinged the other's countenance; then he, too, smiled. He spoke then, addressing von Horst in a language that was not understandable to the European.

"I'm sorry," said von Horst, "but I cannot understand you." Then it was the other's turn to shake his head in denial of comprehension.

Neither could understand the speech of the other; but they had smiled at one another, and they had a common bond in their expectancy of a common fate. Von Horst felt that he was no longer so much alone, almost that he had found a friend. It made a great difference, that slender contact of fellowship, even in the hopelessness of his situation. By comparison with what he had felt previously he was almost contented.

The next time he looked in the direction of the newly hatched reptile the body of its victim had been entirely devoured; there was not even a bone left, and with distended stomach the thing crawled into the round patch of brilliant sunlight beneath the crater opening and curled up for sleep.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The victims had relapsed into silence and again lay as though dead. Time passed; but how much time, von Horst could not even guess. He felt neither hunger nor thirst, a fact which he attributed to his paralysis; but occasionally he slept. Once he was awakened by the flapping of wings, and looked up to see the foul fledgling fly through the crater opening from the nest of horror in which it had been hatched.

After awhile the adult came with another victim, an antelope; and then von Horst saw how he and the other creatures had been paralyzed. Holding the antelope level with its great mouth, the reptile pierced the neck at the base of the brain with the needle-sharp point of its tongue; then it deposited the helpless creature at von Horst's left.

In this timeless void of living death there was no means of determining if there was any regularity of recurring events. Fledglings emerged from their shells, ate them, devoured their prey (always at the far edge of the gap to von Horst's left), slept in the sunlight, and flew away, apparently never to return; the adult came with new victims, paralyzed them, laid them at the edge of the gap nearest von Horst, and departed. The gap crept steadily around to the left; and as it crept, von Horst realized that his inevitable doom was creeping that much nearer.

He and the man at his right occasionally exchanged smiles, and sometimes each spoke in his own tongue. Just the sound of their voices expressing thoughts that the other could not understand was friendly and comforting. Von Horst wished that they might converse; how many eternities of loneliness it would have relieved! The same thought must often have been in the mind of the other, and it was he who first sought to express it and to overcome the obstacle that separated them from full enjoyment of their forced companionship. Once, when von Horst turned his eyes toward him, he said, "Dangar," and tried to indicate himself by bending his eyes toward himself and inclining his chin toward his chest. He repeated this several times.

Finally von Horst thought that he grasped his meaning.

"Dangar?" he asked, and nodded toward the other.

The man smiled and nodded and then spoke a word that was evidently an affirmative in his language. Then von Horst pronounced his own name several times, indicating himself in the same way that Dangar had. This was the beginning. After that it became a game of intense and absorbing interest. They did nothing else, and neither seemed to tire. Occasionally they slept; but now, instead of sleeping when the mood happened to seize one of them, each waited until the other wished to sleep; thus they could spend all their waking hours in the new and fascinating occupation of learning how to exchange thoughts.

Dangar was teaching von Horst his language; and since the latter had already mastered four or five languages of the outer crust, his aptitude for learning another was greatly increased, even though there was no similarity between it and any of the others that he had acquired.

Under ordinary circumstances the procedure would have been slow or seemingly hopeless; but with the compelling incentive of companionship and the absence of disturbing elements, other than when a fledgling hatched and fed, they progressed with amazing rapidity; or so it seemed to von Horst until he realized that in this timeless world

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

weeks, months, or even years of outer terrestrial time might have elapsed since his incarceration.

At last the time arrived when he and Dangar could carry on a conversation with comparative ease and fluency, but as they had progressed so had the fateful gap of doom crept around the circle of the living dead closer and closer to them. Dangar would go first; then von Horst.

The latter dreaded the former event even more than he did the latter, for with Dangar gone he would be alone again with nothing to occupy his time or mind but the inevitable fate that awaited him as he listened for the cracking of the shell that would release death in its most horrible form upon him.

At last there were only three victims between Dangar and the gap. It would not be long now.

"I shall be sorry to leave you," said the Pellucidarian.

"I shall not be alone long," von Horst reminded him.

"No. Well, it is better to die than to remain here far from one's own country. I wish that we might have lived; then I could have taken you back to the land of Sari. It is a beautiful land of hills and trees and fertile valleys; there is much game there, and not far away is the great Lural Az. I have been there to the island of Anoroc, where Ja is king.

"You would like Sari. The girls are very beautiful. There is one there waiting for me now, but I shall never return to her. She will grieve; but—" (he sighed) "— she will get over it, and another will take her for his mate."

"I should like to go to Sari," said von Horst. Suddenly his eyes widened in surprise. "Dangar! Dangar!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" demanded the Pellucidarian. "What has happened?"

"I can feel my fingers! I can move them!" cried von Horst. "And my toes, too."

"It does not seem possible, Von," exclaimed Dangar incredulously.

"But it is; it is! Just a little, but I can move them."

"How do you explain it? I cannot feel anything below my neck."

"The effects of the poison must be wearing off. Perhaps the paralysis will leave me entirely."

Dangar shook his head. "Since I have been here I have never seen it leave a victim that the Trodon stung with its poison tongue. And what if it does? Will you be any better off?"

"I think I shall," replied von Horst slowly. "I have had much leisure in which to dream and plan and imagine situations since I have been imprisoned here. I have often dreamed of being released from this paralysis and what I should do in the event that I were. I have it all planned out."

"There are only three between you and death," Dangar reminded him.

"Yes, I know that. All depends upon how quickly release comes."

"I wish you luck, Von, even though, if it comes to you, I shall not be here to know—there are only two between me and the end. The gap is creeping closer."

From that moment von Horst concentrated all his faculties upon overcoming the pa-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ralysis. He felt the glow of life creep gradually up his limbs, yet still he could move only his extremities, and these but slightly.

Another Trodon hatched, leaving but one between Dangar and death; and after Dangar, it would be his turn. As the horrid creature awoke from its sleep in the sunlight and winged away through the opening in the peak of the cone, von Horst succeeded in moving his hands and flexing his wrists; his feet, too, were free now; but oh, how slow, how hideously slow were his powers returning. Could Fate be so cruel as to hold out this great hope and then snatch it from him at the moment of fruition? Cold sweat broke out upon him as he weighed his chances—the odds were so terribly against him.

If only he could measure time that he might know the intervals of the hatching of the eggs and thus gain an approximate idea of the time that remained to him. He was quite certain that the eggs must hatch at reasonably regular intervals, though he could not actually know. He wore a wrist watch; but it had long since stopped, nor could he have consulted it in any event, since he could not raise his arm.

Slowly the paralysis disappeared as far as his knees and elbows. He could bend these now, and below them his limbs felt perfectly normal. He knew that if sufficient time were vouchsafed him he would eventually be in full command of all his muscles once again.

As he strained to break the invisible bonds that held him another egg broke, and shortly thereafter Dangar lay with no creature at his right—he would be next.

“And after you, Dangar, come I. I think I shall be free before that, but I wished to save you.”

“Thank you, my friend,” replied the Pellucidarian, “but I am resigned to death. I prefer it to living on as I now am—a head attached to a dead body.”

“You wouldn’t have to live like that for long, I’m sure,” said von Horst. “My own experience convinces me that eventually the effects of the poison must wear off. Ordinarily there is enough to keep the victim paralyzed long beyond the time that he would be required to serve as food for the fledglings. If I could only free myself, I could save you, I am sure.”

“Let us talk of other things,” said Dangar. “I would not be a living dead man, and to entertain other hopes can serve but to tantalize and to make the inevitable end more bitter.”

“As you will,” said von Horst, with a shrug, “but you can’t keep me from thinking and trying.”

And so they talked of Sari and the land of Amoz, from whence Dian the Beautiful had come, and The Land of Awful Shadow, and the Unfriendly Islands in the Sojar Az; for von Horst saw that it pleased Dangar to recall these, to him, pleasant places; though when the Sarian described the savage beasts and wild men that roamed them, von Horst felt that as places of residence they left much to be desired.

As they talked, von Horst discovered that he could move his shoulders and his hips. A pleasant glow of life suffused his entire body. He was about to break the news to Dangar when the fateful sound of breaking shell came simultaneously to the ears of both men.

“Good-bye, my friend,” said Dangar. “We of Pellucidar make few friends outside

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

our own tribes. All other men are enemies to kill or be killed. I am glad to call you friend. See, the end comes!"

Already the newly hatched Trodon had gobbled its own shell and was eyeing Dangar. In a moment it would rush upon him. Von Horst struggled to rise, but something seemed to hold him yet. Then, with gaping jaws, the reptile started toward its prey.

ONCE AGAIN von Horst struggled to rise; again he sank back defeated. Perspiration stood out in cold beads over his entire body. He wanted to curse and scream, but he remained silent. Silent, too, was Dangar. He did not cry out as had the others when death crept upon them. It was creeping upon him now—closer and closer. Von Horst raised himself to his left elbow; then he sank back, but as he did so he tried to reach for the gun at his hip—the gun he had tried unsuccessfully to reach before. This time he succeeded. His fingers closed upon the grip. He dragged the gun from its holster. Again he partially raised himself upon an elbow.

The Trodon was almost upon Dangar when von Horst fired. Voicing a piercing scream, it leaped high in air, fluttered its wings futilely for an instant, and then fell heavily to the floor of the pit—dead.

Dangar looked at von Horst in amazement and in gratitude. "You have done it," he said; "and I thank you, but what good will it do. How can we ever escape from this pit? Even if there were a way I could not take advantage of it—I who cannot move even a finger."

"That remains to be seen," replied von Horst. "When the paralysis has left you we shall find a way for that even as I have for this. But a moment since what would you have given for your chance of escaping the Trodon? Nothing, absolutely nothing; yet you are alive and the Trodon is dead. Who are you to say that the impossible cannot be accomplished?"

"You are right," replied Dangar. "I shall never doubt you again."

"Now to gain time," exclaimed von Horst. He picked up Dangar, then, and carried him across the gap and laid him down beside the last victim that the adult Trodon had brought in. As he lay down beside him, he remarked, "The next one to hatch will get neither of us, for it will go to the other side of the gap."

"But what about the old one when it brings in the next victim?" asked Dangar. "Won't it see that our positions have been changed? And there is the body of one of its young, too; what do you suppose it will do about that?"

"I doubt that the Trodon will notice us at all," replied von Horst, "but if it does, I shall be ready for it. I still have my pistol and plenty of ammunition; and as for the dead chicken, I'll dispose of that immediately. I think we can use it."

He rose then and dragged the carcass to one side of the pit, hiding it behind several eggs. Then he examined it closely, feeling of its skin. Apparently satisfied, he drew his hunting knife and fell to work to remove the skin from the carcass.

He worked rapidly but carefully, his whole attention riveted upon his task, so that it came somewhat in the nature of a surprise when the sunlight beating in through the mouth of the crater was momentarily disturbed.

Glancing up, he saw the Trodon returning with another victim; and instantly he flat-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tened himself prone against the wall of the pit behind some eggs that he had arranged for this purpose, at the same time drawing his pistol.

Just the top of his head and his eyes protruded above one of the eggs, these and the cold, black muzzle of his weapon, as he watched the unsuspecting reptile deposit its victim beside Dangar. As he had anticipated, the creature paid no attention to the Pellucidarian; and a moment later it had vanished through the opening in search of other prey.

Without further interruption, von Horst completed the skinning of the fledgling; then he dragged the body to the spot that Dangar had previously occupied.

The Sarian laughed. "A clever way to dispose of the carcass," he said, "if it works."

"I think it will," replied von Horst. "These brainless little devils are guided by instinct at first. They always go to the same spot for their first meal, and

I'll wager they'll eat anything they find there."

"But what are you going to do with the skin?"

"Wait and see. It constitutes the most important part of my plan for escape. I'll admit that it's a rather harebrained scheme; but it's the only one that I have been able to formulate, and it has some chance for success. Now I must go back and get busy at it again."

Von Horst returned to his work; and now he cut the skin into a continuous strip, starting from the outside. It took him a long time, and when he had completed the work it was necessary to trim the rough edges of the outside cut and scrape the inside surface of the long, flat strap that had resulted from his labors. While von Horst was measuring the strap by the crude tip-of-nose-to-tip-of-the-fingers method, his attention was attracted by the hatching of another Trodon.

"Sixty-six, sixty-seven, sixty-eight," counted von Horst as he watched the fledgling devour the shell of its egg. "That's over two hundred feet. Should be more than enough."

The other preliminaries having been gone through, the Trodon approached the skinned carcass of its brother. Both von Horst and Dangar watched with interest, as, without an instant's hesitation, the reptile fell upon the body and devoured it.

After it had flown away, von Horst crossed over and lay down beside Dangar. "You were right," admitted the latter, "it never knew the difference."

"I think they are so low in the scale of intelligence that they are guided almost exclusively by instinct, even the adults. That is why the old one did not notice that I was missing and that you were in a different place. If I am right, my plan will have a better chance of success.

"Do you feel any different, Dangar? Do you feel any life returning to your limbs?"

The Sarian shook his head. "No," he replied, rather dejectedly. "I'm afraid that will never happen, but I can't understand how you recovered. That still gives me hope. Can you explain it?"

"I don't know. I have a theory. You can see that all the victims of the Trodon are thin-skinned animals. That might indicate that the needle point of its tongue, by means of which the poison is injected, can either break only thin skin or can penetrate only to a shallow depth. While I was skinning the chicken I took off my leather jacket, and in ex-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

amining it I discovered that the tongue of the Trodon ran through two thicknesses of leather and canvass lining at the back of the collar before entering my flesh. Look; see the round, green stain encircling the puncture. Perhaps some of the poison was wiped off, or perhaps the sting didn't puncture me deeply enough to have full effect.

"Anyhow, I am more than ever convinced that no matter how much poison a victim receives, short of a lethal dose, he will recover eventually. You unquestionably received a larger dose than I, but you have been here longer than I; so it may not be long now before you will note signs of recovery."

"I am commencing to have hope," replied Dangar.

"Something will have to be done soon," said the other. "Now that the paralysis has left me and my body is functioning normally, I am commencing to feel both hunger and thirst. I shall have to put my plan to the test at the first opportunity before I become too weak to carry through with it."

"Yes," said Dangar. "Get out if you can. Don't think of me."

"I'll take you with me."

"But that will be impossible—even if you can get out of this hole yourself, which I doubt."

"Nevertheless, I shall take you; or I will not go myself."

"No," demurred Dangar. "That would be foolish. I won't permit it."

"How are you going to prevent it?" laughed von Horst. "Leave it all to me. The plan may fail anyway. But I'm going to start putting it into effect at once."

He crossed the pit and took his long strap of reptile hide from behind the eggs where he had concealed it. Then he made a running noose in one end. This he spread on the floor at a point near where the adult Trodon would deposit its next victim. Carefully he ran the strap to his hiding place behind the eggs, left a coil there, and then took the remainder to a point beneath the mouth of the crater but just outside the circle of brilliant sunlight. Here he neatly coiled most of what remained of the strap, so that it might pay out smoothly. He took great pains with this. The remaining loose end he carried to his hiding place; then he settled himself comfortably to wait.

How long he waited, of course he never knew; but it seemed an eternity. Hunger and thirst assailed him, as did doubts and fears of the effectiveness of his plan. He tried not to sleep, for to sleep now might prove fatal; but he must have dozed.

He awakened with a start to see the great Trodon squatting in the shaft of sunlight injecting its paralyzing poison into the neck of a new victim. Von Horst felt suddenly very weak. It had been a close call. Another moment, perhaps, and it would have been too late to test his plan. He doubted that he could hold out until the reptile returned again. Everything, therefore, depended upon success at the first cast of the die—his life and Dangar's. Quickly he gathered his nervous forces under control. Again he was cool, collected. He loosened his pistol in its holster and took a new grip on the strap.

The Trodon crossed the pit, bearing the paralyzed victim to its place in the lethal circle. It placed one great hind paw in the open noose. Von Horst sent a running wave of the rope across the floor that lifted the noose up the creature's leg above the ankle; then he gave a quick jerk. The noose tightened a little. Was it enough?

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Would it hold? As he had expected, the creature paid no attention to the strap. It appeared not to feel it, and von Horst was quite sure that it did not. So low was its nervous organization, he believed, that only a sharp blow on the leg would have carried any sensation to the brain.

After it had deposited the latest victim, the reptile turned toward the center of the pit, leaped into the air and fluttered aloft. Von Horst held his breath. Would the noose be shaken loose? Heaven forbid. It held. Von Horst leaped to his feet and ran toward the center of the pit, his pistol cocked and ready in his hand; and as the Trodon rose through the mouth of the crater and cleared the top of the hill, the man fired three shots in rapid succession.

He did not need the horrid screams of the wounded creature to tell him that his aim had been true, for he saw the great reptile careen in air and plunge from sight beyond the rim of the crater; then von Horst leaped for the end of the strap, seized it, braced himself, and waited.

There was danger that the body of the creature, tumbling down the steep side of the cone-shaped hill, might not come to rest before it jerked the strap from his hands; so he quickly wound it around his body and hurriedly made it fast. He might be killed; but he wouldn't loose his strap or jeopardize this, his last chance of escape from the pit. For a moment the strap played out rapidly from the coil; then it stopped. Either the body of the Trodon had come to rest or the noose had slipped from the hind leg. Which?

Von Horst pulled on the strap fearfully. Soon it tautened; then he knew that it was still attached to the creature. A vague doubt assailed him as to whether the Trodon had been killed or not. He knew how tenacious of life such creatures might be. Suppose it were not dead? What dire possibilities such an event might entail!

The man tugged on the strap. It did not give. Then he swung on it with all his weight. It remained as before. Still, clinging to the loose end, he crossed the pit to Dangar, who was gazing at him wide-eyed with astonishment.

"You should have been a Sarian," said Dangar with admiration.

Von Horst smiled. "Come," he said. "Now for you." He stooped and lifted the Pellucidarian from the ground and carried him to the center of the pit beneath the crater mouth; then he made the loose end of the strap secure about his body beneath the arms.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dangar.

"Just now I am going to make the inner world a little safer for thin-skinned animals," replied Von Horst.

He went to the side of the pit, commenced breaking the eggs with the butt of his pistol. In two eggs, those most closely approaching the end of the period of incubation, he discovered quite active young. These he destroyed; then he returned to Dangar.

"I hate to leave these other creatures here," he said, gesturing toward the unhappy victims; "but there is no other way. I cannot get them all out."

"You'll still be lucky if you get yourself out," commented Dangar.

Von Horst grinned. "We'll both be lucky," he replied, "but this is our lucky day." There was no word for day in the language of the inner world, where there is neither day nor night; so von Horst substituted a word from one of the languages of the outer world.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Be patient and you'll soon be out."

He grasped the strap and started up hand-overhand. Dangar lay on his back watching him, renewed admiration shining in his eyes. It was a long, dangerous climb; but at length von Horst reached the mouth of the crater.

As he topped the summit and looked down, he saw the carcass of the Trodon lodged on a slight ledge a short distance beneath him. The creature was quite evidently dead. That was the only interest that the man had in it; so he turned at once to his next task, which was to haul Dangar to the mouth of the crater.

Von Horst was a powerful man; but his strength had already been tested to its limit, and perhaps it had been partially sapped by the long period of paralysis he had endured. Added to this was the precarious footing that the steep edge of the crater mouth afforded; yet he never for a moment lost hope of eventual success; and though it was slow work, he was finally rewarded by seeing the inert form of the Pellucidarian lying at the summit of the hill beside him.

He would have been glad to rest now, but his brief experience of Pellucidar warned him that this exposed hilltop was no place to seek sanctuary. He must descend to the bottom, where he could see a few trees and a little stream of water, take Dangar with him, and search for a hiding place. The hillside was very steep, but fortunately it was broken by rudimentary ledges that offered at least a foothold. In any event, there was no other way to descend; and so von Horst lifted Dangar across one of his broad shoulders and started the perilous descent. Slipping and stumbling, he made his slow way down the steep hillside; and constantly he kept his eyes alert for danger. Occasionally he fell, but always managed to catch himself before being precipitated to the bottom.

He was fairly spent when he finally staggered into the shade of a clump of trees growing beside the little stream that he had seen from the summit of the hill. Laying Dangar on the sward, he slaked his thirst with the clear water of the brook. It was the second time that he had drunk since he had left the camp where the great dirigible, O-220, had been moored. How much time had elapsed he could not even guess; days it must have been, perhaps weeks or even months; yet for most of that time the peculiar venom of the Trodon had not only paralyzed him but preserved the moisture in his body, keeping it always fresh and fit for food for the unhatched fledgling by which it was destined to be devoured.

Refreshed and strengthened, he rose and looked about. He must find a place in which to make a more or less permanent camp, for it was quite obvious that he could not continue to carry Dangar in his wanderings. He felt rather helpless, practically alone in this unknown world. In what direction might he go if he were free to go? How could he ever hope to locate the O-220 and his companions in a land where there were no points of compass? when, even if there had been, he had only a vague idea of the direction of his previous wanderings and less of the route along which the Trodon had carried him?

As soon as the effects of the poison should have worn off and Dangar was free from the bonds of paralysis, he would have not only an active friend and companion but one who could guide him to a country where he might be assured of a friendly welcome and an opportunity to make a place for himself in this savage world, where, he was inclined

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

to believe, he must spend the rest of his natural life. It was by far not this consideration alone that prompted him to remain with the Sarian but, rather, sentiments of loyalty and friendship.

A careful inspection of the little grove of trees and the area contiguous to it convinced him that this might be as good a place as any to make a camp. There was fresh water, and he had seen that game was plentiful in the vicinity. Fruits and nuts grew upon several of the trees; and to his question as to their edibility, Dangar assured him that they were safe.

"You are going to stay here?" asked the Sarian.

"Yes, until you recover from the effects of the poison."

"I may never recover. What then?"

Von Horst shrugged. "Then I shall be here a long while," he laughed.

"I could not expect that even of a brother," objected Dangar. "You must go in search of your own people."

"I could not find them. If I could, I would not leave you here alone and helpless."

"You would not have to leave me helpless."

"I don't understand you," said von Horst.

"You would kill me, of course; that would be an act of mercy."

"Forget it," snapped von Horst. The very idea revolted him.

"Neither one of us may forget it," insisted Dangar. "After a reasonable number of sleeps, if I am not recovered, you must destroy me." He used the only measure of time that he knew—sleeps. How much time elapsed between sleeps or how long each sleep endured, he had no means of telling.

"That is for the future," replied von Horst shortly. "Right now I'm interested only in the matter of making camp. Have you any suggestions?"

"There is greatest safety in caves in cliffsides," replied Dangar. "Holes in the ground are often next best; after that, a platform or a shelter built among the branches of a tree."

"There are no cliffs here," said von Horst, "nor do I see any holes in the ground; but there are trees."

"You'd better start building, then," advised the Pellucidarian, "for there are many flesh eaters in Pellucidar; and they are always hungry."

With suggestions and advice from Dangar, von Horst constructed a platform in one of the larger trees, using reeds that resembled bamboo, which grew in places along the margin of the stream. These he cut with his hunting knife and lashed into place with a long, tough grass that Dangar had seen growing in clumps close to the foot of the hill.

At the latter's suggestion, he added walls and a roof as further protection against the smaller arboreal carnivora, birds of prey, and carnivorous flying reptiles.

He never knew how long it took him to complete the shelter; for the work was absorbing, and time flew rapidly. He ate nuts and fruit at intervals and drank several times, but until the place was almost completed he felt no desire to sleep.

It was with considerable difficulty, and not without danger of falling, that he carried Dangar up the rickety ladder that he had built to gain access to their primitive abode;

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but at length he had him safely deposited on the floor of the little hut; then he stretched out beside him and was asleep almost instantly.

WHEN von Horst awoke he was ravenously hungry. As he raised himself to an elbow, Dangar looked at him and smiled.

"You have had a long sleep," he said, "but you needed it."

"Was it very long?" asked von Horst.

"I have slept twice while you slept once," replied Dangar, "and I am now sleepy again."

"And I am hungry," said von Horst, "ravenously hungry; but I am sick of nuts and fruit. I want meat; I need it."

"I think you will find plenty of game down stream," said Dangar. "I noticed a little valley not far below here while you were carrying me down the hill. There were many animals there."

Von Horst rose to his feet. "I'll go and get one."

"Be careful," cautioned the Pellucidarian. "You are a stranger in this world. You do not know all the animals that are dangerous. There are some that look quite harmless but are not. The red deer and the thag will often charge and toss you on their horns or trample your life out, though they eat no meat. Look out for the bucks and the bulls of all species and the shes when they have young. Watch above, always, for birds and reptiles. It is well to walk where there are trees to give you shelter from these and a place into which to climb to escape the others."

"At least I am safe from one peril," commented von Horst.

"What is that?" asked Dangar.

"In Pellucidar, I shall never die of ennui."

"I do not know what you mean. I do not know what ennui is."

"No Pellucidarian ever could," laughed von Horst, as he quit the shelter and descended to the ground.

Following Dangar's suggestion, he followed the stream down toward the valley that the Sarian had noticed, being careful to remain as close to trees as possible and keeping always on the alert for the predatory beasts, birds, and reptiles that are always preying upon lesser creatures.

He had not gone far when he came in sight of the upper end of the valley and saw a splendid buck antelope standing alone as though on guard. He offered a splendid shot for a rifle, but the distance was too great to chance a pistol shot; so von Horst crept closer, taking advantage of the cover afforded by clumps of tall grasses, the bamboo-like reeds, and the trees. Cautiously he wormed his way nearer and nearer to his quarry that he might be sure to bring it down with the first shot. He still had a full belt of cartridges, but he knew that when these were gone the supply could never be replenished—every one of them must count.

His whole attention centered upon the buck, he neglected for the moment to be on the watch for danger. Slowly he crept on until he reached a point just behind some tall grasses that grew but a few paces from the still unsuspecting animal. He raised his pistol

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

to take careful aim, and as he did so a shadow passed across him. It was but a fleeting shadow, but in the brilliant glare of the Pellucidarian sun it seemed to have substance. It was almost as though a hand had been laid upon his shoulder. He looked up, and as he did so he saw a hideous thing diving like a bullet out of the blue apparently straight for him—a mighty reptile that he subconsciously recognized as a pteranodon of the Cretaceous. With a roaring hiss, as of a steam locomotive's exhaust, the thing dropped at amazing speed. Mechanically, von Horst raised his pistol although he knew that nothing short of a miracle could stop or turn that frightful engine of destruction before it reached its goal; and then he saw that he was not its target. It was the buck. The antelope stood for a moment as though paralyzed by terror; then it sprang away—but too late. The pteranodon swooped upon it, seized it in its mighty talons, and rose again into the air.

Von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "What a world!" he muttered, wondering how man had survived amidst such savage surroundings.

Farther down the little valley he now saw many animals grazing. There were deer and antelope and the great, shaggy bos so long extinct upon the outer crust. Among them were little, horselike creatures, no larger than a fox terrier, resembling the Hyracotherium of the Eocene, early progenitors of the horse, which but added to the amazing confusion of birds, mammals, and reptiles of various eras of the evolution of life on the outer crust.

The sudden attack of the pteranodon upon one of their number frightened the other animals in the immediate vicinity; and they were galloping off down the valley, snorting, squealing, and bucking leaving von Horst to contemplate the flying hoofs of many a fine dinner. There was nothing to do but follow them if he would have meat; and so he set off after them, keeping close to the fringe of trees along the stream which wound along one side of the valley. But to add to his discomfiture, those that had initiated the stampede bore down upon the herds grazing below them, imparting their terror to these others, with the result that the latter joined them; and in a short time all were out of sight.

Most of them kept on down the valley, disappearing from the man's view where the valley turned behind the hills; but he saw a few large sheep run into a canyon between two nearby cones, and these he decided to pursue. As he entered the canyon he saw that it narrowed rapidly, evidently having been formed by the erosion of water which had uncovered the broken lava rocks of a previous flow. Only a narrow trail ran between some of the huge blocks, hundreds of which were scattered about in the wildest confusion.

The sheep had been running rapidly; and as they had started considerably ahead of him, he knew that they must be out of earshot by now; so he made no effort to hide his pursuit, but moved at a quick walk along the winding trail between the rocks. He came at last to a point where the trail debouched upon a wider portion of the canyon, and as he was about to enter it he heard plainly the sound of running feet coming toward him from the upper portion of the canyon, which he could not see. And then he heard a disconcerting series of growls and snarls from the same direction. He had already seen enough of Pellucidar and its bloodthirsty fauna to take it for granted that practically everything that had life might be considered a potential menace; so he leaped quickly behind a large

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

lava rock and waited.

He had scarcely concealed himself, when a man came running from the upper end of the gorge. It seemed to von Horst that the newcomer was as fleet as a deer. And it was well for him that he was fleet, for behind him came the author of the savage snarls and growls that von Horst had heard—a great, dog-like beast as large and savage as a leopard. As fleet as the man was, however, the beast was gaming on him; and it was apparent to von Horst that it would overtake its quarry and drag him down before he had crossed the open space.

The fellow was armed only with a crude stone knife, which he now carried in one hand, as though determined to make what fight for his life he might when he could no longer outdistance his pursuer; but he must have realized, as did von Horst, how futile his weapon would be against the powerful beast bearing down upon him.

There was no question in von Horst's mind as to what he should do. He could not stand idly by and see a human being torn to pieces by the cruel fangs of the Hyaenodon, and so he stepped from behind the rock that had concealed him from both the man and the beast; and, jumping quickly to one side where he might obtain an unobstructed shot at the creature, raised his pistol, took careful aim, and fired. It was not a lucky shot; it was a good shot, perfect. It bored straight through the left side of the brute's chest and buried itself in his heart. With a howl of pain and rage, the carnivore bounded forward almost to von Horst; then it crumpled at his feet, dead.

The man it had been pursuing, winded and almost spent, came to a halt. He was wide-eyed and trembling as he stood staring at von Horst in wonder and amazement. As the latter turned toward him he backed away, gripping his knife more tightly.

"Go away!" he growled. "I kill!"

He spoke the same language that Dangar had taught von Horst, which, he had explained, was the common language of all Pellucidar; a statement that the man from the outer crust had doubted possible.

"You kill what?" demanded von Horst.

"You."

"Why do you wish to kill me?"

"So that I shall not be killed by you."

"Why should I kill you?" asked von Horst. "I just saved your life. If I had wished you to die, I could have just left you to that beast."

The man scratched his head. "That is so," he admitted after some reflection; "but still I do not understand it. I am not of your tribe; therefore there is no reason why you should not wish to kill me. I have never seen a man like you before. All other strangers that I have met have tried to kill me. Then, too, you cover your body with strange skins. You must come from a far country."

"I do," von Horst assured him; "but the question now is, are we to be friends or enemies?"

Again the man ran his nails through his shock of black hair meditatively. "It is very peculiar," he said. "It is something that I have never before heard of. Why should we be

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

friends?”

“Why should we be enemies?” countered von Horst. “Neither one of us has ever harmed the other. I am from a very far country, a stranger in yours. Were you to come to my country, you would be treated well. No one would wish to kill you. You would be given shelter and fed. People would be kindly toward you, just because they are kindly by nature and not because you could be of any service to them. Here, it is far more practical that we be friends; because we are surrounded by dangerous beasts, and two men can protect themselves better than one.

“However, if you wish to be my enemy, that is up to you. I may go my way, and you yours; or, if you wish to try to kill me, that, too, is a matter for you to decide; but do not forget how easily I killed this beast here. Just as easily could I kill you.”

“Your words are true words,” said the man. “We shall be friends. I am Skruf. Who are you?”

In his conversations with Dangar, von Horst had noticed that no Pellucidarians that the other had mentioned had more than one name, to which was sometimes added a descriptive title such as the Hairy One, the Sly One, the Killer, or the like; and as Dangar usually called him von, he had come to accept this as the name he would use in the inner world; so this was the name that he gave to Skruf.

“What are you doing here?” asked the man. “This is a bad country because of the Trodons.”

“I have found it so,” replied von Horst. “I was brought here by a Trodon.”

The other eyed him skeptically. “You would be dead now if a Trodon had ever seized you.”

“One did, and took me to its nest to feed its young. I and another man escaped.”

“Where is he?”

“Back by the river in our camp. I was hunting for food when I met you. I was following some sheep up this canyon. What were you doing here?”

“I was escaping from the Mammoth Men,” replied Skruf. “Some of them captured me. They were taking me back to their country to make a slave of me, but I escaped from them. They were pursuing me, but when I reached this canyon I was safe. In places it is too narrow to admit a mammoth.”

“What are you going to do now?”

“Wait until I think they have given up the chase and then return to my own country.”

Von Horst suggested that Skruf come to his camp and wait and that then the three of them could go together as far as their trails were identical, but first he wished to bag some game. Skruf offered to help him, and with the latter’s knowledge of the quarry it was not long before they had found the sheep and von Horst had killed a young buck. Skruf was greatly impressed and not a little frightened by the report of the pistol and the, to him, miraculous results that von Horst achieved with it.

After skinning the buck and dividing the weight of the carcass between them, they set off for camp, which they reached without serious interruption. Once a bull thag charged them, but they climbed trees and waited until it had gone away, and another

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

time a sabertooth crossed their path; but his belly was full, and he did not molest them. Thus, through the primitive savagery of Pellucidar, they made their way to the camp.

Dangar was delighted that von Horst had returned safely, for he knew the many dangers that beset a hunter in this fierce world. He was much surprised when he saw Skruf; but when the circumstances were explained to him he agreed to accept the other as a friend, though this relationship with a stranger was as foreign to his code as to Skruf's.

Skruf came from a land called Basti which lay in the same general direction as Sari, though much closer; so it was decided that they would travel together to Skruf's country as soon as Dangar recovered.

Von Horst could not understand how these men knew in what direction their countries lay when there were no means of determining the points of the compass, nor could they explain the phenomenon to him. They merely pointed to their respective countries, and they pointed in the same general direction. How far they were from home neither knew; but by comparing notes, they were able to assume that Sari lay very much farther away than Basti. What von Horst had not yet discovered was that each possessed, in common with all other inhabitants of Pellucidar, a well developed homing instinct identical with that of most birds and which is particularly apparent in carrier pigeons.

As sleeps came and went and hunting excursions were made necessary to replenish their larder, Skruf grew more and more impatient of the delay. He was anxious to return to his own country, but he realized the greater safety of numbers and especially that of the protection of von Horst's miraculous weapon that killed so easily at considerable distances. He often questioned Dangar in an effort to ascertain if there was any change in his condition, and he was never at any pains to conceal his disappointment when the Sarian admitted that he still had no feeling below his neck.

On one occasion when von Horst and Skruf had gone farther afield than usual to hunt, the latter broached the subject of his desire to return to his own country; and the man of the outer crust learned for the first time the urge that prompted the other's impatience.

"I have chosen my mate," explained Skruf, "but she demanded the head of a tarag to prove that I am a brave man and a great hunter. It was while I was hunting the tarag that the Mammoth Men captured me. The girl has slept many times since I went away. If I do not return soon some other warrior may bring the head of a tarag and place it before the entrance to her cave; then, when I return, I shall have to find another who will mate with me."

"There is nothing to prevent your returning to your own country whenever you see fit," von Horst assured him.

"Could you kill a tarag with that little thing that makes such a sharp noise?" inquired Skruf.

"I might." Von Horst was not so certain of this; at least he was not certain that he could kill one of the mighty tigers quickly enough to escape death from its formidable fangs and powerful talons before it succumbed.

"The way we have come today," remarked Skruf, tentatively, "is in the direction of my country. Let us continue on."

"And leave Dangar?" asked von Horst.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Skruf shrugged. "He will never recover. We cannot remain with him forever. If you will come with me, you can easily kill a tarag with the thing you call pistol; then I will place it before the entrance to the girl's cave, and she will think that I killed it. In return, I will see that the tribe accepts you. They will not kill you. You may live with us and be a Bastian. You can take a mate, too; and there are many beautiful girls in Basti."

"Thanks," replied von Horst; "but I shall remain with Dangar. It will not be long now before he recovers. I am sure that the effects of the poison will disappear as they did in my case. The reason that they have persisted so much longer is that he must have received a much larger dose than I."

"If he dies, will you come with me?" demanded Skruf.

Von Horst did not like the expression in the man's eyes as he asked the question. He had never found Skruf as companionable as Dangar. His manner was not as frank and open. Now he was vaguely suspicious of his intentions and his honesty, although he realized that he had nothing tangible upon which to base such a judgment and might be doing the man an injustice. However, he phrased his reply to Skruf's question so that he would be on the safe side and not be placing a premium on Dangar's life. "If he lives," he said, "we will both go with you when he recovers." Then he turned back toward the camp.

Time passed. How much, von Horst could not even guess. He had attempted to measure it once, keeping his watch wound and checking off the lapse of days on a notched stick; but where it is always noon it is not always easy to remember either to wind or consult a watch. Often he found that it had run down; and then, of course, he never knew how long it had been stopped before he discovered that it was not running; nor, when he slept, did he ever know for how long a time. So presently he became discouraged; or, rather, he lost interest. What difference did the duration of time make, anyway? Had not the inhabitants of Pellucidar evidently existed quite as contentedly without it as they would have with? Doubtless they had been more contented. As he recalled his world of the outer crust he realized that time was a hard task master that had whipped him through life a veritable slave to clocks, watches, bugles, and whistles.

Skruf often voiced his impatience to be gone, and Dangar urged them not to consider him but to leave him where he was if they would not kill him. And so the two men slept or ate or hunted through the timeless noon of the eternal Pellucidarian day; but whether it was for hours or for years, von Horst could not tell.

He tried to accustom himself to all this and to the motionless sun hanging forever in the exact center of the hollow sphere, the interior surface of which is Pellucidar and the outer, the world that we know and that he had always known; but he was too new to his environment to be able to accept it as did Skruf and Dangar who never had known aught else.

And then he was suddenly awakened from a sound sleep by the excited cries of Dangar. "I can move!" exclaimed the Sarian. "Look! I can move my fingers."

The paralysis receded rapidly, and as Dangar rose unsteadily to his feet the three men experienced a feeling of elation such as might condemned men who had just received their reprieves. To von Horst it was the dawning of a new day, but Dangar and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Skruf knew nothing of dawns. However, they were just as happy.

“And now,” cried Skruf, “we start for Basti. Come with me, and you shall be treated as my brothers. The people will welcome you, and you shall live in Basti forever.”

THE ROUTE that Skruf took from the country of the black craters to the land of Basti was bewilderingly circuitous, since it followed the windings of rivers along the banks of which grew the trees and thickets that offered the oft needed sanctuary in this world of constant menace, or led through gloomy forests, or narrow, rocky gorges. Occasionally, considerable excursions from the more direct route were necessitated when periods of sleep were required, for then it became imperative that hiding places be discovered where the three might be reasonably safe from attack while they slept.

Von Horst became so confused and bewildered during the early stages of the long journey that he had not the remotest conception of even the general direction in which they were traveling, and often doubted Skruf's ability to find his way back to his own country; but neither the Bastian nor Dangar appeared to entertain the slightest misgiving.

Game was plenty—usually far too plenty and too menacing—and von Horst had no difficulty in keeping them well supplied; but the steady drain upon his store of ammunition made him apprehensive for the future, and he determined to find some means of conserving his precious cartridges that he might have them for occasions of real emergency when his pistol might mean a matter of life and death to him.

His companions were, culturally, still in the stone age, having no knowledge of any weapon more advanced than clubs, stone knives, and stone tipped spears; so, having witnessed the miraculous ease and comparative safety with which von Horst brought down even large beasts with his strange weapon, they were all for letting him do the killing.

For reasons of his own, largely prompted by his suspicions concerning Skruf's loyalty, von Horst did not wish the others to know that his weapon would be harmless when his supply of ammunition was exhausted; and they were too ignorant of all matters concerning firearms to deduce as much for themselves. It was necessary, therefore, to find some plausible excuse for insisting that their hunting be done with other weapons.

Skruf was armed with a knife and a spear when they set out upon their journey; and as rapidly as he could find the materials and fashion them, Dangar had fabricated similar weapons for himself. With his help, von Horst finally achieved a spear; and shortly thereafter commenced to make a bow and arrows. But long before they were completed he insisted that they must kill their game with the primitive weapons they possessed because the report of the pistol would be certain to attract the attention of enemies to them. As they were going through a country in which Skruf assured them they might meet hunting and raiding parties from hostile tribes, both he and Dangar appreciated the wisdom of von Horst's suggestion; and thereafter the three lay in wait for their prey with stone-shod spears.

The ease with which von Horst adapted himself to the primitive life of his cavemen companions was a source of no little wonder even to himself. How long a time had elapsed since he left the outer crust, he could not know; but he was convinced that it could not

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

have been more than a matter of months; yet in that time he had sloughed practically the entire veneer of civilization that it had taken generations to develop, and had slipped back perhaps a hundred thousand years until he stood upon a common footing with men of the old stone age. He hunted as they hunted, ate as they ate, and often found himself thinking in terms of the stone age.

Gradually his apparel of the civilized outer crust had given way to that of a long dead era. His boots had gone first. They had been replaced by sandals of mammoth hide. Little by little his outer clothing, torn and rotten, fell apart until he no longer covered his nakedness; then he had been forced to discard it and adopt the skin loin cloth of his companions. Now, indeed, except for the belt of cartridges, the hunting knife, and the pistol, was he a veritable man of the Pleistocene.

With the completion of his bow and a quantity of arrows, he felt that he had taken a definite step forward. The thought amused him. Perhaps now he was ten or twenty thousand years more advanced than his fellows. But he was not to remain so long. As soon as he had perfected himself in the use of the new weapons, both Dangar and Skruf were anxious to possess similar ones. They were as delighted with them as children with new toys; and soon learned to use them, Dangar, especially, showing marked aptitude. Yet the pistol still intrigued them. Skruf had constantly importuned von Horst to permit him to fire it, but the European would not let him even touch it.

"No one can safely handle it but myself," he explained. "It might easily kill you if you did."

"I am not afraid of it," replied Skruf. "I have watched you use it. I could do the same. Let me show you."

But von Horst was determined to maintain the ascendancy that his sole knowledge of the use of the pistol gave him, and it was later to develop that his decision was a wise one. But the best corroborating evidence of his assurance to Skruf that the weapon would be dangerous to anyone but von Horst was furnished by Skruf himself.

All during the journey Skruf kept referring to his desire to take home the head of a tarag that he might win the consent of his lady-love. He was constantly suggesting that von Horst shoot one of the great brutes for him, until it became evident to both von Horst and Dangar that the fellow was terrified at the thought of attempting to kill one by himself. Von Horst had no intention of tempting fate by seeking an encounter with this savage monster, a creature of such enormous proportions, great strength, and awful ferocity that it has been known to drag down and kill a bull mastodon single-handed.

They had not chanced to cross the path of one of the monsters; and von Horst was hopeful that they would not, but the law of chance was against him. No one may blame von Horst for a disinclination to pit himself against this monster of a bygone age with the puny weapons that he carried. Even his pistol could do little more than enrage the creature. Could he reach its heart with any weapon it would die eventually, but probably not quickly enough to save him from a terrible mauling and almost certain death. Yet, of course, there was always a chance that he might conquer the great brute.

Then it happened, and so suddenly and unexpectedly that there was no opportunity for preparation. The three men were walking single file along a forest trail. Von Horst

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

was in the lead, followed by Skruf. Suddenly, without warning, a tarag leaped from the underbrush directly in their path not three paces from von Horst. To the eyes of the European it appeared as large as a buffalo, and perhaps it was. Certainly it was a monstrous creature with gaping jaws and flaming eyes.

The instant that it struck the ground in front of the men it leaped for von Horst. Skruf turned and fled, knocking Dangar down in his precipitate retreat. Von Horst had not even time to draw his pistol, so quickly was the thing upon him. He happened to be carrying his spear in his right hand with the tip forward. He never knew whether the thing he did was wholly a mechanical reaction or whether by intent. He dropped to one knee, placed the butt of the spear on the ground and pointed the head at the beast's throat; and in the same instant the tarag impaled itself upon the weapon. Von Horst held his ground; the shaft of the spear did not break; and notwithstanding all its strength and size, the beast could not quite reach the man with its talons.

It screamed and roared and threshed about, tearing at the spear in an agony of pain and rage; and every instant von Horst expected that the shaft must break and let the beast fall upon him. Then Dangar ran in and, braving the dangers of those clawing talons, thrust his spear into the tarag's side—not once, but twice, three times the sharp stone point sank into the heart and lungs of the great tiger until, with a final scream, it sank lifeless to the ground. And when it was all over, Skruf descended from a tree in which he had taken refuge and fell upon the carcass with his crude knife. He paid no attention to either von Horst or Dangar as he hacked away until he finally severed the head. Then he wove a basket of long grasses and strapped the trophy to his back. All this he did without even a by-your-leave, nor did he thank the men who had furnished the trophy with which he hoped to win a mate.

Both von Horst and Dangar were disgusted with him, but perhaps the European was more amused than angry; however, the remainder of that march was made in silence, nor did one of them refer to the subject again in any way, though the stench from the rotting head waxed more and more unbearable as they proceeded on their way to the country of the Bastians.

The three men had hidden themselves away in a deserted cave high in a cliffside to sleep, shortly following the encounter with the tarag which had occurred after Skruf had made his final appeal for a chance to show what he could do with a pistol, when von Horst and Dangar were awakened by a shot. As they leaped to their feet, they saw Skruf toppling to the floor of the cave as he hurled the pistol from him. Von Horst rushed to the man's side where he lay writhing and moaning, but a brief examination convinced the European that the fellow was more terrified than hurt. His face was powder marked, and there was a red welt across one cheek where the bullet had grazed it. Otherwise, the only damage done was to his nervous system; and that had received a shock from which it did not soon recover. Von Horst turned away and picked up his pistol. Slipping it into its holster, he lay down again to sleep. "The next time it will kill you, Skruf," he said. That was all. He was confident that the man had learned his lesson. For some time after the incident in the cave, Skruf was taciturn and surly; and on several occasions von Horst detected the man eyeing him with an ugly expression on his dark countenance; but eventually this mood either passed or was suppressed, for as they neared Basti he grew al-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

most jovial.

"Well soon be there," he announced after a long sleep. "You're going to see a tribe of fine people, and you're going to be surprised by the reception you'll get. Basti is a fine country; you'll never leave it."

On that march, they left the low country and the river they had been following and entered low hills beyond which loomed mountains of considerable height. Eventually Skruf led them into a narrow gorge between chalk cliffs. It was a winding gorge along which they could see but a short distance either ahead or behind. A little stream of clear water leaped and played in the sunlight on its way down to some mysterious, distant sea. Waving grasses grew upon thin topsoil at the summit of the cliffs; and there was some growth at the edges of the stream where soil, washing down from above, had lodged—some flowering shrubs and a few stunted trees.

Skruf was in the lead. He appeared quite excited, and kept repeating that they were almost at the village of the Bastians. "Around the next turn," he said presently, "the lookout will see us and give the alarm."

The prophesy proved correct, for as they turned a sharp corner of the cliff upon their left, a voice boomed out from above them in a warning that reverberated up and down the gorge. "Some one comes!" it shouted, and then to those below him, "Stop! or I kill. Who are you who come to the land of the Bastians?"

Von Horst looked up to see a man standing upon a ledge cut from the face of the chalk cliff. Beside him were a number of large boulders that he could easily shove off onto anyone beneath.

Skruf looked up at the man and replied, "We are friends. I am Skruf."

"I know you," said the lookout, "but I do not know the others. Who are they?"

"I am taking them to Frag, the chief," replied Skruf. "One is Dangar, who comes from a country he calls Sari; the other comes from another country very far away."

"Are there more than three?" asked the lookout.

"No," replied Skruf; "there are only three."

"Take them to Frug, the chief," directed the lookout.

The three continued along the gorge, coming at length to a large, circular basin in the surrounding walls of which von Horst saw many caves. Before each cave was a ledge, and from one ledge to the next ladders connected the different levels. Groups of women and children clustered on the ledges before the mouths of the caves, staring down at them questioningly, evidently having been warned by the cry of the lookout. A row of warriors stretched across the basin between them and the cliffs where the caves lay. They, too, appeared to have been expecting the party, and were ready to receive them in whatever guise they appeared, whether as friends or foes.

"I am Skruf," cried that worthy. "I wish to see Frug. You all know Skruf."

"Skruf has been gone for many sleeps," replied one. "We thought he was dead and would come no more."

"But I am Skruf," insisted the man.

"Come forward then, but first throw down your weapons."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

They did as they were bid; but Skruf, who was in the lead, did not observe that von Horst retained his pistol. The three men advanced, and as they did so they were completely surrounded by the warriors of Basti who were now pressing forward.

"Yes, he is Skruf," remarked several as they drew nearer; but there was no cordiality in their tones, no slightest coloring of friendship. They halted presently before a huge man, a hairy man. He wore a necklace of the talons of bears and tigers. It was Frug.

"You are Skruf," he announced. "I see that you are Skruf, but who are these?"

"They are prisoners," replied Skruf, "that I have brought back to be slaves to the Basti. I have also brought the head of a tarag that I killed. I shall place it before the cave of the woman I would mate with. Now I am a great warrior."

Von Horst and Dangar looked at Skruf in amazement. "You have lied to us, Skruf," said the Sarian. "We trusted you. You said that your people would be our friends."

"We are not the friends of our enemies," growled Frug, "and all men who are not Bastians are our enemies."

"We are not enemies," said von Horst. "We have hunted and slept with Skruf as friends for many sleeps. Are the men of Basti all liars and cheats?"

"Skruf is a liar and a cheat," said Frug; "but I did not promise that I would be your friend, and I am chief. Skruf does not speak for Frug."

"Let us go our way to my country," said Dangar. "You have no quarrel with me or my people."

Frug laughed. "I do not quarrel with slaves," he said. "They work, or I kill them. Take them away and put them to work," he ordered, addressing the surrounding warriors.

Immediately several Bastians closed in on them and seized them. Von Horst saw that resistance would be futile. He might kill several of them before he emptied his pistol; but they would almost certainly overpower him in the end; or, more probably, run a half dozen spears through him. Even though they did not, and he escaped temporarily, the lookout in the gorge below would but have to topple a couple of boulders from his ledge to finish him as effectually.

"I guess we're in for it," he remarked to Dangar.

"Yes," replied the Sarian. "I see now what Skruf meant when he said that we would be surprised by the reception we got and that we would never leave Basti."

The guards hustled them to the foot of the cliff and herded them up ladders to the highest ledge. Here were a number of men and women working with crude stone instruments chipping and scraping away at the face of the chalk cliff, scooping out a new ledge and additional caves. These were the slaves. A Bastian warrior squatting upon his heels in the shadow of the entrance to a new cave that was being excavated directed the work. Those who had brought Dangar and von Horst to the ledge turned them over to this man.

"Was it Skruf who took these men prisoners?" asked the guard. "It looked like him from here, but it doesn't seem possible that such a coward could have done it."

"He tricked them," explained the other. "He told them they would be received here as friends and be well treated. He brought back the head of a tarag, too; he is going to put it at the entrance to the cave where the slave girl, La-ja, sleeps. He asked Frug for

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

her, and the chief told him he could have her if he brought back the head of a tarag. Frug thought that was a good joke—the same as saying no.”

“Men of Basti do not mate with slaves,” said the guard.

“They have,” the other reminded him; “and Frug has given his word, and he will keep it—only I’d have to see Skruf kill a tarag before I’d believe it.”

“He didn’t kill it,” said Dangar.

The two men looked at him in surprise. “How do you know?” asked the guard.

“I was there,” replied Dangar, “when this man killed the tarag. He killed it with a spear while Skruf climbed a tree. After it was dead he came down and cut off its head.”

“That sounds like Skruf,” said the warrior who had accompanied them to the ledge; then the two turned their attention to von Horst.

“So you killed a tarag with a spear?” one demanded, not without signs of respect.

Von Horst shook his head. “Dangar and I killed it together,” he explained. “It was really he who killed it.”

Then Dangar told them how von Horst had faced the beast alone and impaled it on his spear. It was evident during the recital that their respect for von Horst was increasing.

“I hope that I am lucky enough to get your heart,” said the guard; then he found tools for them and set them to work with the other slaves.

“What do you suppose he meant when he said that he hoped he would be lucky enough to get my heart,” asked von Horst after the guard had left them.

“There are men who eat men,” replied Dangar. “I have heard of them.”

THE SHADOWY coolness of the cave in which von Horst and Dangar were put to work was a relief from the glare and heat of the sun in the open. At first the men were only dimly aware of the presence of others in the cave; but when their eyes became accustomed to the subdued light, they saw a number of slaves chipping at the walls. Some of them were on crude ladders, slowly extending the cave upward. Most of the slaves were men; but there were a few women among them, and one of the latter was working next to von Horst.

A Bastian warrior who was directing the work in the cave watched von Horst for a few moments; then he stopped him. “Don’t you know anything?” he demanded. “You are doing this all wrong. Here!” He turned to the woman next to the European. “You show him the way, and see that he does it properly.”

Von Horst turned toward the woman, his eyes now accustomed to the subdued light of the cave. She had stopped work and was looking at him. The man saw that she was young and very good looking. Unlike the Bastian women he had seen, she was a blond.

“Watch me,” she said. “Do as I do. They will not ill treat you if you are slow, but they will if you make a poor job of what you are doing.”

Von Horst watched her for awhile. He noted her regular features, the long lashes that shaded her large, intelligent eyes, the alluring contours of her cheek, her neck, and her small, firm breasts. He decided that she was very much better looking than his first glance had suggested.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Suddenly she turned upon him. "If you watch my hands and the tools you will learn more quickly," she said.

Von Horst laughed. "But nothing half so pleasant," he assured her.

"If you wish to do poor work and get beaten, that is your own affair."

"Watch me," he invited. "See if I have not improved already just from watching your profile."

With his stone chisel and mallet he commenced to chip away at the soft chalk; then, after a moment, he turned to her again. "How is that?" he demanded.

"Well," she admitted reluctantly, "it is better; but it will have to be much better. When you have been here as long as I have, you will have learned that it is best to do good work."

"You have been here long?" he asked.

"For so many sleeps that I have lost count. And you?"

"I just came."

The girl smiled. "Came! You mean that you were just brought."

Von Horst shook his head. "Like a fool, I came. Skruf told us that we would be well received, that his people would treat us as friends. He lied to us."

"Skruf!" The girl shuddered. "Skruf is a coward and a liar; but it is well for me that he is a coward. Otherwise he might bring the head of a tarag and place it before the entrance to the cave where I sleep."

Von Horst opened his eyes in astonishment. "You are La-ja, then?" he demanded.

"I am La-ja, but how did you know?" In her musical tones her name was very lovely—the broad a's, the soft j, and the accent on the last syllable.

"A guard said that Frug had told Skruf that he might have you if he brought the head of a tarag. I recalled the name; perhaps because it is so lovely a name."

She ignored the compliment. "I am still safe, then," she said, "for that great coward would run from a tarag."

"He did," said von Horst, "but he brought the head of the beast back to Basti with him."

The girl looked horrified and then skeptical. "You are trying to tell me that Skruf killed a tarag?" she demanded.

"I am trying to tell you nothing of the sort. Dangar and I killed it; but Skruf cut off its head and brought it with him, taking the credit."

"He'll never have me!" exclaimed La-ja tensely. "Before that, I'll destroy myself."

"Isn't there something else you can do? Can't you refuse to accept him?"

"If I were not a slave, I could; but Frug has promised me to him; and, being a slave, I have nothing to say in the matter."

Von Horst suddenly felt a keen personal interest—just why, it would have been difficult for him to explain. Perhaps it was the man's natural reaction to the plight of a defenseless girl; perhaps her great beauty had something to do with it. But whatever the cause, he wanted to help her.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Isn't there any possibility of escape?" he asked. "Can't we get out of here after dark? Dangar and I would help you and go with you."

"After dark?" she asked. "After what is dark?"

Von Horst grinned ruefully. "I keep forgetting," he said.

"Forgetting what?"

"That it is never dark here."

"It is dark in the caves," she said.

"In my country it is dark half the time. While it is dark, we sleep; it is light between sleeps."

"How strange!" she exclaimed. "Where is your country, and how can it ever be dark? The sun shines always. No one ever heard of such a thing as the sun's ceasing to shine."

"My country is very far away, in a different world. We do not have the same sun that you have. Some time I will try to explain it to you."

"I thought you were not like any man I had ever seen before. What is your name?"

"Von," he said.

"Von—yes, that is a strange name, too."

"Stranger than Skruf or Frug?" he asked, grinning.

"Why, yes; there is nothing strange about those names."

"If you heard all of my name, that might sound strange to you."

"Is there more than Von?"

"Very much more."

"Tell it to me."

"My name is Frederich Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst."

"Oh, I could never say all that. I think I like Von."

He wondered why he had told her that Frederich Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst was his name. Of course he had used it for so long that it seemed quite natural to him; but now that he was no longer in Germany, perhaps it was senseless to continue with it. Yet what difference did it make in the inner world? Von was an easy name to pronounce, an easy one to remember—Von he would continue to be, then.

Presently the girl yawned. "I am sleepy," she said. "I shall go to my cave and sleep. Why do you not sleep at the same time; then we shall be awake at the same time, and—why, I can show you about your work."

"That's a good idea," he exclaimed, "but will they let me sleep now? I just started to work."

"They let us sleep whenever we wish to, but when we awaken we have to come right back to work. The women sleep in a cave by themselves, and there is a Basti woman to watch them and see that they get to work as soon as they are awake. She is a terrible old thing."

"Where do I sleep?" he asked.

"Come, I'll show you. It is the cave next to the women's."

She led the way out onto the ledge and along it to the mouth of another cave. "Here is

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

where the men sleep," she said. "The next cave is where I sleep."

"What are you doing out here?" demanded a guard.

"We are going to sleep," replied La-ja.

The man nodded; and the girl went on to her cave, while von Horst entered that reserved for the men slaves. He found a number of them asleep on the hard floor, and was soon stretched out beside Dangar, who had accompanied them.

How long he slept, von Horst did not know. He was awakened suddenly by loud shouting apparently directly outside the entrance to the cave. At first he did not grasp the meaning of the words he heard; but presently, after a couple of repetitions, he was thoroughly awake; and then he grasped their full import and recognized the voice of the speaker.

It was Skruf; and he was shouting, over and over, "Come out, La-ja! Skruf has brought you the head of a tarag. Now you belong to Skruf."

Von Horst leaped to his feet and stepped out onto the ledge. There, before the entrance to the adjoining cave, lay the rotting head of the tarag; but Skruf was nowhere in sight.

At first von Horst thought that he had entered the cave in search of La-ja; but presently he realized that the voice was coming from below. Looking over the edge of the ledge, he saw Skruf standing on a ladder a few feet below. Then he saw La-ja run from the cave, her countenance a picture of tragic despair.

He had stepped to the head of the ladder, beside which lay the tarag's head, and so was directly in front of the mouth of the cave as La-ja emerged. Something about her manner, her expression, frightened him. She did not seem to see him as she ran past him toward the edge of the cliff. Intuitively, he knew what was in her mind; and as she passed him, he threw an arm about her and drew her back.

"Not that, La-ja," he said quietly.

She came to herself with a start, as though from a trance. Then she clung to him and commenced to sob.

"There is no other way," she cried. "He must not get me."

"He shall not," said the man; then he looked down upon Skruf. "Get out of here," he said, "and take your rotten head with you." With his foot, he pushed the mass of corruption over the edge of the ledge so that it fell full upon Skruf. For an instant it seemed that it had toppled him from the ladder, but with agility of a monkey he regained his hold.

"Go on down," directed von Horst, "and don't come up here again. This girl is not for you."

"She belongs to me; Frug said I could have her. I'll have you killed for this." The man was almost frothing at the mouth, so angry was he.

"Go down, or I'll come down there and throw you down," threatened von Horst.

A hand was laid on his shoulder. He swung around. It was Dangar who stood beside him. "Here comes the guard," he said. "You are in for it now. I am with you. What shall we do?"

The guard was coming along the ledge, the same big fellow that had received them.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

There were other guards in the several caves that were being excavated, but so far the attention of only this one seemed to have been attracted.

"What are you doing, slave?" he bellowed. "Get to work! What you need is a little of this." He swung a club in his hairy right fist.

"You're not going to hit me with that," said von Horst. "If you come any closer, I'll kill you."

"Your pistol, Von," whispered Dangar.

"I can't waste ammunition," he replied.

The guard had paused. He seemed to be attempting to discover just how the slave intended killing him and with what. To all appearances the man was unarmed; and while he was tall, he was far from being as heavy a man as the guard. Finally the fellow must have concluded that von Horst's words were pure bluff, for he came on again.

"You'll kill me, will you?" he roared; then he rushed forward with club upraised.

He was not very fast on his feet, and his brain was even slower—his reactions were pitifully retarded. So when von Horst leaped forward to meet him, he was not quick enough to change his method of attack in time to meet the emergency. Von Horst stepped quickly to one side as the fellow lunged abreast of him; then he swung a terrific blow to the Bastian's chin, a blow that threw him off balance on the very brink of the ledge. As he tottered there, von Horst struck him again; and this time he toppled out into space; and, with a scream of fright, plunged down toward the bottom of the cliff a hundred feet below.

Dangar and the girl stood there, wide-eyed in consternation. "What have you done, Von!" cried the latter. "They will kill you now—and all on my account."

Even as she spoke, another guard emerged from one of the caves farther along the ledge; and then the remaining two came from the other caves in which they had been directing the work of the slaves. The scream of the fellow that von Horst had knocked from the ledge had attracted their attention.

"Get behind me," von Horst directed La-ja and Dan-gar, "and fall back to the far end of the ledge. They can't take us if they can't get behind us."

"They'll have us cornered then, and there will be no hope for us," objected the girl. "If we go into one of the caves where it is not so light and where there are loose bits of rock to throw at them we may be able to hold them off. But even so, what good will that do? They will get us anyway, no matter what we do."

"Do as I tell you," snapped von Horst, "and be quick about it."

"Who are you to give me orders?" demanded Laja. "I am the daughter of a chief."

Von Horst wheeled and pushed her back into Dangar's arms. "Take her to the far end of the ledge," he ordered; then he fell back with them, as Dangar dragged the furious La-ja along the ledge. The guards were advancing toward the three. They did not know exactly what had happened, but they knew that something was wrong.

"Where is Julp?" demanded one.

"Where you will be if you don't do as I tell you," replied von Horst.

"What do you mean by that, slave? Where is he?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I knocked him off the ledge. Look down."

The three paused and peered over the edge. Below them they saw the body of Julp, and now the angry voices of those who had gathered about it rose to them. Skruf was there. He alone could surmise what had befallen Julp, and he was telling the others about it in a loud tone of voice as Frug joined the group.

"Bring that slave down to me," Frug shouted to the guards on the ledge.

The three started forward again to seize von Horst. The man whipped his pistol from its holster. "Wait!" he commanded. "If you don't wish to die, listen to me. There is the ladder. Go down."

The three eyed the pistol, but they did not know what it was. To them it was nothing more than a bit of black stone. Perhaps they thought that von Horst purposed throwing it at them or using it as a club. The idea made them grin; so they came on, contemptuously.

Now, the woman who guarded the women slaves came from their cave, attracted by all the commotion outside, and joined the men. She was an unprepossessing slattern of indeterminate age with a vicious countenance. Von Horst guessed that she might be even more formidable than the men, but he shrank from the necessity of shooting down a woman. In fact, he did not wish to shoot any of them—poor ignorant cave dwellers of the stone age—but it was their lives or his and Dangar's and La-ja's.

"Go back!" he cried. "Go down the ladder. I don't wish to kill you."

For answer, the men laughed at him and came on. Then von Horst fired. One of the men was directly behind the leader, and at the shot they both collapsed, screaming, and rolled from the ledge. The other man and the woman stopped. The report of the pistol would alone have been sufficient to give them pause, so terrifying was it to them; but when they saw their comrades pitch from the ledge their simple minds were overwhelmed.

"Go down," von Horst commanded them, "before I kill you, too. I shall not give you another chance."

The woman snarled and hesitated, but the man did not wait. He had seen enough. He sprang toward the ladder and hastened to descend, and a moment later the woman gave up and followed him. Von Horst watched them; and when they had reached the next ledge below, he motioned Dangar to him. "Give me a hand with this ladder," he said, and the two dragged it up to the ledge on which they stood. "This will stop them for awhile," he remarked.

"Until they bring another ladder," suggested Dangar.

"That will take a little time," replied von Horst, "— a long time if I take a shot at them while they are doing it."

"Now, what are we to do next?" inquired Dangar.

La-ja was eyeing von Horst from beneath lowering brows, her eyes twin pits of smoldering anger; but she did not speak. Von Horst looked at her and was glad that she did not. He saw trouble ahead in that beautiful, angry face—beautiful even in anger.

The other slaves were now coming fearfully from the caves. They looked about for the guards and saw none; then they saw that the ladder had been drawn up.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"What has happened?" one asked.

"This fool has killed three guards and driven the others away," snapped La-ja. "Now we must either remain here and starve to death or let them come up and kill us."

Von Horst paid no attention to them. He was looking up, scanning the face of the cliff that inclined slightly inward to the summit about thirty feet above him.

"He killed three guards and drove the others off the ledge?" demanded one of the slaves, incredulously.

"Yes," said Dangar; "alone, he did it."

"He is a great warrior," said the slave, admiringly.

"You are right, Thorek," agreed another. "But Laja is right, too; it is death for us now no matter what happens."

"Death but comes a little sooner; that is all," replied Thorek. "It is worth it to know that three of these eaters of men have been killed. I wish that I had done it."

"Are you going to wait up here until you starve to death or they come up and kill you?" demanded von Horst.

"What else is there to do?" demanded a slave from Amdar.

"There are nearly fifty of us," said von Horst. "It would be better to go down and fight for our lives than wait here to die of thirst or be killed like rats, if there were no other way; but I think there is."

"Your words are the words of a man," exclaimed Thorek. "I will go down with you and fight."

"What is the other way?" asked the man from Amdar.

"We have this ladder," explained von Horst, "and there are other ladders in the caves. By fastening some of them together we can reach the top of the cliff. We could be a long way off before the Bastians could overtake us, for they would have to go far down the gorge before they came to a place where they could climb out of it."

"He is right," said another slave.

"But they might overtake us," suggested another who was timid.

"Let them!" cried Thorek. "I am a mammoth man. Should I fear to fight with my enemies? Never. All my life I have fought them. It was for this that my mother bore me and my father trained me."

"We talk too much," said von Horst. "Talk will not save us. Let those who wish to, come with me; let the others remain here. Fetch the other ladders. See what you can find with which to fasten them together."

"Here comes Frug!" shouted a slave. "He is coming up with many warriors."

Von Horst looked down to see the hairy chief climbing upward toward the ledge; behind him came many warriors. The man from the outer crust grinned, for he knew that his position was impregnable.

"Thorek," he said, "take men into the caves to gather fragments of rock, but do not throw them down upon the Bastians until I give you the word."

"I am a mammoth man," replied Thorek, haughtily. "I do not take orders from any

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but my chief."

"Right now I am your chief," snapped von Horst. "Do as I tell you. If each of us tries to be chief, if no one will do as I order, we may stay here until we rot."

"I take orders from no man who is not a better man than I," insisted Thorek.

"What does he mean, Dangar?" asked von Horst.

"He means you'll have to fight him—and win— before he'll obey you," explained the Sarian.

"Are all the rest of you fools too?" demanded von Horst. "Do I have to fight each one of you before you will help me to help you escape?"

"If you defeat Thorek, I will obey you," said the man from Amdar.

"Very well, then," agreed von Horst. "Dangar, if any of these idiots will help you, go in and get rocks to hold off Frug until the matter is settled. Just try to keep them from setting up another ladder to this ledge. Thorek, you and I will go into one of the caves and see who is head man. If we tried to decide the matter out here, we'd probably both wind up at the bottom of the cliff."

"All right," agreed the mammoth man. "I like your talk. You will make a great chief—if you win; but you won't. I am Thorek, and I am a mammoth man."

Von Horst was almost amused by the evidences of haughty pride that these primitive people revealed. He had seen it in La-ja in an exaggerated form and now, again, in Thorek. Perhaps he admired them a little for it—he had no patience with spineless worms—but he felt that they might have mixed a little common sense with it. He realized, however, that it reflected a tremendous ego, such as the human race must have possessed in its earliest stages to have permitted it to cope with the forces that must constantly have threatened it with extinction.

He turned to Thorek. "Come," he said; "let's get it over, so that something worth while can be done." As he spoke, he entered one of the caves; and Thorek followed him.

"With bare hands?" asked von Horst.

"With bare hands," agreed the mammoth man.

"Come on, then."

Von Horst, from boyhood, had been a keen devotee of all modes of defense and offense with various weapons and with none at all. He had excelled as an amateur boxer and wrestler. Heretofore it had availed him little of practical value, other than a certain prideful satisfaction in his ability; but now it was to mean very much indeed. It was to establish his position in the stone age among a rugged people who admitted no superiority that was not physical.

At his invitation, Thorek charged down upon him like a wild bull. In height they were quite evenly matched, but Thorek was stockier and outweighed von Horst by ten or fifteen pounds. Their strength was, perhaps, about equal, though the Pellucidarian looked far more powerful because of his bulging muscles. It was skill that would count, and Thorek had no skill. His strategy consisted in overwhelming an antagonist by impetus and weight, crushing him to earth, and pummeling him into insensibility. If he killed him in the process— well, that was just the other fellow's tough luck.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

But when he threw himself at von Horst, von Horst was not there. He had ducked beneath the flailing arms and sidestepped the heavy body; then he had landed a heavy blow at Thorek's jaw that had snapped his head and dazed him. But the fellow still kept his feet, turned, and came lumbering in again for more; and he got it. This time he went down. He tried to stagger to his feet, and another blow sent him sprawling. He didn't have a chance. Every time he got part way to his feet, he was knocked flat again. At last he gave up and lay where he had fallen.

"Who is chief?" demanded von Horst.

"You are," said Thorek.

As VON HORST turned and ran out of the cave, Thorek rose groggily to his feet and followed him. On the ledge a number of the slaves were lined up with Dangar ready to hurl rocks on the ascending Bastians, whom von Horst saw had reached the second ledge below that was occupied by the slaves.

He looked about and saw Thorek emerging from the cave. "Take some men and get the ladders," von Horst directed his late antagonist.

The other slaves looked quickly at the mammoth man to see how he would accept this command. What they saw astonished them. Thorek's face was already badly swollen, there was a cut above one eye and his nose was bleeding. His whole face and much of his body were covered with blood, which made his injuries appear graver than they really were.

Thorek turned toward the other slaves. "Some of you go into each cave and bring out the ladders," he said.

"Let the women find thongs with which to bind them together."

"Who is chief?" asked one of the men so addressed.

"He is chief," replied Thorek, pointing at von Horst.

"He is not my chief, and neither are you," retorted the man, belligerently.

Von Horst was suddenly hopeless. How could he get anywhere, how could he accomplish anything, with such stupid egotists to contend with?

Thorek, however, was not at all discouraged. He suddenly leaped upon the fellow; and before the man had time to gather his slow wits, lifted him above his head and hurled him from the cliff. Then he turned to the others. "Get the ladders," he said, and as one man they set about doing his bidding.

Now von Horst turned his attention again to Frug and the other warriors below. They offered an excellent target; and he could easily have driven them back had he cared to, but he had another plan. In low tones he issued instructions to his companions, having them line up along the ledge while the Bastians climbed to that directly below. In the meantime the ladders had been carried out; and the women were busy lashing several of them together, making two long ladders.

La-ja stood sullenly apart, glaring at von Horst, and making no pretense of helping the other women with their work; but the man paid no attention to her, which probably added to her resentment and her wrath. Frug was bellowing threats and commands from the ledge below, and from the bottom of the cliff the women and children were shouting

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

encouragement to their men.

"Bring me the man called Von," shouted Frug, "and none of the rest of you shall be punished."

"Come up and get him," challenged Thorek.

"If the men of Basti were better than old women they would do something more than stand down there and shout," taunted von Horst. He threw a small fragment of rock that struck Frug on the shoulder. "See," he exclaimed, "how easily we could drive away the old women who are not strong enough to hurl their spears up here!"

That insult was too much for the Bastians. Instantly spears began to fly; but the slaves were ready, and as the weapons rose to their level they reached out and seized many of them. As the others dropped back to the Bastians, they were hurled again; and soon the slaves were armed, as von Horst had hoped.

"Now, the rocks," he directed; and the slaves commenced to pelt their antagonists with small missiles until they took refuge in the caves on the level below. "Don't let them come out," ordered von Horst. "Dangar, you take five men and let every Bastian that shows his head get a rock on it; the rest of you men raise the ladders."

When the ladders, rickety and sagging, were leaned against the cliff they just topped its summit; and von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the success of his plan thus more nearly assured. He turned to Thorek. "Take three men and go to the top of the cliff. If the way is clear, tell me; and I will send up the women and the rest of the men."

As Thorek and the three climbed aloft, the ladders creaked and bent; but they held, and presently the mammoth man called down that all was well.

"Now, the women," said von Horst; and all the women but one started up the ladders. That one was La-ja. She ignored the ladders as she had ignored von Horst, and again the man paid no attention to her. Soon all but Dangar and his five men, von Horst, and La-ja had climbed safely to the cliff top. One by one, von Horst sent the five up; and he and Dangar kept the Bastians below confined in the caves where they might not know what was going on upon the ledge above; for he knew that they could bring other ladders from the caves in which they were hiding and enough of them reach the ledge that he and Dangar were defending to overcome them easily.

La-ja, now, was his greatest problem. Had she been a man, he would have left her; and his better judgment told him that he should leave her anyway, but he could not. Perhaps she was a stubborn little fool; but he realized that he could not know what strange standards of pride, custom, environment, and heredity had bequeathed her. How might he judge her? Her attitude might seem right and proper to her, no matter how indefensible it appeared to him.

"I wish you would go up with the others, La-ja," he said. "We three may be recaptured if you don't."

"Go yourself, if you wish," she retorted. "La-ja will remain here."

"Do not forget Skruf," he reminded her.

"Skruf will never have me. I can always die," she replied.

"You will not come, then?" he asked.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I would rather stay with Skruf than go with you."

Von Horst shrugged and turned away. The girl was watching him intently to see what effects her insult had upon him, and she flushed with anger when he showed no resentment.

"Give them a few more rocks, Dangar," directed von Horst; "then get to the cliff top as fast as you can."

"And you?" asked the Sarian.

"I shall follow you."

"And leave the girl?"

"She refuses to come," replied von Horst.

Dangar shrugged. "She needs a beating," he said.

"I would kill any man that laid a hand on me," said La-ja, belligerently.

"Nevertheless, you need a beating," insisted Dangar; "then you would have more sense." He gathered up several rocks and hurled them at a head that appeared from one of the caves below; then he turned and swarmed up one of the ladders.

Von Horst walked toward the other ladder. It took him close to La-ja. Suddenly he seized her. "I am going to take you with me," he said.

"You are not," she cried, and commenced to strike and kick him.

Without great difficulty he carried her as far as the ladder; but when he tried to ascend it, she clung to it. He struggled upward and gained a couple of rounds, but she fought so viciously and clung so desperately that he soon saw they must be overtaken if the Bastians reached this ledge.

Already he heard their voices raised more loudly from below, indicating that they had come from the caves. He heard Frug directing the raising of a ladder. In a moment they would be upon them. He looked down at the beautiful face of the angry girl. He could drop her and leave her to the tender mercies of the Bastians. There was still time for him to gain the summit of the cliff alone. But there was another way, a way he shrank from; yet he saw no alternative if he were to save them both. He drew back a clenched fist and struck her heavily on the side of the head, and instantly she went limp in his arms; then he climbed upward as rapidly as he could with the dead weight of the unconscious girl hampering his every movement. He had almost reached the top when he heard a shout of triumph below him. Glancing downward, he saw a Bastian just clambering onto the ledge upon which the ladder rested. If the fellow could lay hands upon the ladder he could drag them down to death or recapture. Von Horst shifted the weight of the girl so that her body hung balanced over his left shoulder. This freed his left hand so that he could cling to the ladder as he drew his pistol with his right. He had to swing out and backward to get a bead on the Bastian; and he had to do all this in a fraction of the time it takes to tell it; for if the first man reached the ledge, there would be another directly behind him; and one shot would not stop them both.

He fired just as the Bastian was about to step from the ladder to the ledge. The fellow toppled backward. There were yells and curses from below; and though von Horst could not see what happened, he was certain that the falling body had knocked others from the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ladder. Once again he hastened upward, and a moment later Dangar and Thorek reached down and dragged him and the girl to the summit of the cliff.

"Your luck is with you," said Thorek. "Look; they are right behind you."

Von Horst looked down. The Bastians had raised other ladders and were clambering rapidly onto the ledge below. Some of them were already climbing the ladders that the slaves had raised to the cliff top. Others of the slaves were standing near von Horst looking down at the Bastians. "We had better run," said one. "They will soon be up here."

"Why run?" demanded Thorek. "Are we not armed even better than they? We have most of their spears."

"I have a better plan," said von Horst. "Wait until the ladders are full."

He called other slaves to him then, and waited. It was but a matter of seconds when the ladders were both filled with climbing Bastians; then von Horst gave the word, and a score of hands pushed the ladders outward from the face of the cliff. Screams of terror broke from the lips of the doomed Bastians as the slaves toppled the ladders over backward, and a dozen bodies hurtled down the face of the cliff to fall at the feet of the women and children.

"Now," said von Horst, "let's get out of here." He looked down at the girl still lying on the sward where they had placed her, and he was suddenly stunned by the realization that she might be dead—that the blow he had struck her had killed her. He dropped to his knees beside her and placed an ear over her heart. It was beating, and beating strongly.

With a sigh of relief, he lifted the inanimate form to his shoulder again.

"Where to now?" he asked, addressing the entire gathering of escaped slaves.

"At first we'd better get out of the Bastian country," counselled Thorek. "After that, we can plan."

The way led through hills and mountain gorges, and finally out into a lovely valley teeming with wild life; but though they often encountered fierce beasts they were not attacked.

"There are too many of us," explained Dangar when von Horst commented upon their apparent immunity. "Occasionally you'll find a beast that will attack a whole tribe of men, but ordinarily they are afraid of us when we are in numbers."

Long before they reached the valley, La-ja regained consciousness. "Where am I?" she demanded. "What has happened?"

Von Horst lowered her from his shoulder and steadied her until he saw that she could stand. "I brought you away from Basti," he explained. "We are free now."

She looked at him, knitting her brows as though trying to recall a fleeting memory that eluded her.

"You brought me!" she said. "I said I would not come with you. How did you do it?"

"I—er—I put you to sleep," he fumbled hesitatingly.

The thought that he had struck her humiliated him.

"Oh, I remember," she said; "you struck me."

"I had to," he replied. "I am very sorry, but there was no other way. I could not leave

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

you there among those beasts.”

“But you did strike me.”

“Yes, I struck you.”

“Why did you wish to bring me? Why did you care whether or not I was left to Skruf?”

“Well, you see—I—but how could I leave you there?”

“If you think I am going to be your mate now, you are mistaken,” she said with emphasis.

Von Horst flushed. The young lady seemed to be jumping to embarrassing conclusions. She was certainly candid. Perhaps that was a characteristic of the stone age. “No,” he replied; “after the things that you said to me and did to me, I had no reason either to believe that you would be my mate or that I would wish you to be.”

“Well,” she snapped, “I wouldn’t be—I should prefer Skruf.”

“Thanks,” said von Horst. “Now we understand one another.”

“And hereafter,” said La-ja, “you can attend to your own affairs and leave me alone.”

“Certainly,” he replied stiffly, “just so long as you obey me.”

“I obey no one.”

“You’ll obey me,” he said determinedly, “or I’ll punch your head again.” The words surprised him much more than they seemed to surprise the girl. How could he have said such a thing to a woman? Was he reverting to some primordial type? Was he becoming, indeed, a man of the old stone age? She walked away from him then and joined the women. On her lips was a strange little melody, such perhaps as women of the outer crust hummed to the singing stars when the world was young.

When they reached the valley, some of the men made a kill; and they all ate. Then they held a council, discussing plans for the future.

Each individual wished to go his way to his own country, and while there was safety in numbers there was also danger to each in going into the country of another. There were some, like Dangar, who could promise a friendly reception to those who wished to accompany them to their land; but there were few who dared take the chance. Both von Horst and Dangar recalled the fair promises of Skruf and the manner in which they had been belied.

To von Horst, it was a strange world; but then, he realized, it might be anywhere from fifty thousand to half a million years younger than the world with which he was familiar, with a corresponding different philosophy and code of ethics. Yet these people were quite similar to types of the outer crust. They were more naive, perhaps; less artificial, and they certainly had fewer inhibitions; but they revealed, usually in a slightly exaggerated form, all the characteristics of present day men and women of a much older humanity.

He considered La-ja. Envisioning her frocked in the latest mode, he realized that she might pass unnoticed, except for her great beauty, in any capital of Europe. No one would dream, to look at her, that she had stepped from the Pleistocene. He was not so certain, however, as to what one might think who crossed her.

The result of the council was a decision of each to return to his own country. There

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

were several from Amdar, and they would go together. There were others from Go-hal. Thorek came from Ja-ru, the country of the mammoth-men; La-ja from Lohar; Dangar, from Sari. These three, with von Horst, could proceed together for awhile, as their paths lay in the same general direction.

After the council, they sought and found a place to sleep—a place of caves in cliffs. As they awoke, each individual or each party set out in the direction of his own country with only instinct as his guide. The countries of most of them were not far distant. Sari was the farthest. From what von Horst could gather, it might be half way around this savage world; but what was a matter of distance when there was no time by which to measure the duration of a journey?

There were no good-byes. A group or an individual walked out of the lives of those others with whom they had suffered long imprisonment, with whom they had fought and won to freedom; and there was no sign of regret at parting—just the knowledge that when next they met, they would meet as mortal enemies, each eager to slay the other. This was true of most of them, but not of all. There was a real friendship existing between von Horst and Dangar, and something that approached it between these two and Thorek. Where La-ja stood, who might know? She was very aloof. Perhaps because she was the daughter of a chief; perhaps because she was a very beautiful young woman whose pride had been hurt, or who was nursing a knowledge that her woman's intuition had vouchsafed her, or because she was by nature reserved. Whatever her reason, she kept her own counsel.

Several sleeps after the party of slaves had broken up, Thorek announced that his path now diverged from theirs. "I wish that you were coming to Ja-ru with me," he said to von Horst. "You should have been a mammoth man; we are all great warriors. If we ever meet again, let us meet as friends."

"That suits me," replied von Horst. "May it hold for all of us." He looked at Dangar and La-ja.

"A Sarian may be friends with any brave warrior," said the former. "I would be friends always with you."

"I would be friends with Thorek and Dangar," said La-ja.

"And not with Von?" asked the Sarian.

"I would not be friends with Von," she replied.

Von Horst shrugged and smiled. "But I am your friend, always, La-ja," he said.

"I do not wish you for a friend," she replied. "Did I not say so?"

"I'm afraid you can't help yourself."

"We'll see about that," she said, enigmatically.

So Thorek left them, and the three continued on their way. It seemed a hopeless, aimless journey to von Horst. In the bottom of his consciousness, he did not believe that either Dangar or La-ja had the slightest conception of where they were going. He did not possess the homing instinct himself, and so he could not conceive that such a sense existed in man or woman.

When they were confronted by high mountains they circled them. They followed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

mysterious rivers until they found a ford, and then they crossed in constant danger from weird reptiles that had been long extinct upon the outer crust. The fords were quite bad enough; they never dared swim a river. Never did they know what lay ahead of them, for this country was as strange to the two Pellucidarians as it was to von Horst.

They came through low hills to a narrow valley upon the far side of which grew a dense forest, such a forest as von Horst had never seen before in this world or his own. Even at a distance it looked grim and forbidding. As they passed down the valley, von Horst was glad that their way did not lead through the forest; for he knew how depressing the long gloom of a broad forest might become.

Presently La-ja stopped. "Which way is your country, Dangar?" she asked.

He pointed down the valley. "That way," he said, "until we reach the end of these high hills; then I turn to the right."

"It is not my way," said La-ja. "Lo-har lies this way," and she pointed straight toward the forest. "Now I must leave you and go to my own country."

"The forest does not look good to me," said Dangar. "Perhaps you would never get through it alive. Come to Sari with Von and me. You will be well treated."

The girl shook her head. "I am the daughter of a chief," she said. "I must return to Lo-har and bear sons, for my father has none; otherwise there will be no good chief to rule over my father's people after he is dead."

"But you cannot go alone," said von Horst. "You could never come through alive. You would merely be throwing away your life, and then you would never have any sons at all."

"I must go," she insisted, "or for what purpose am I the daughter of a chief?"

"Aren't you afraid?" asked von Horst.

"I am the daughter of a chief," she said, with her chin in the air, defiantly; but von Horst thought that her square little chin trembled. Perhaps it was just a shadow.

"Good-by, Dangar," she said presently, and turned away from them toward the forest. She did not say good-bye to von Horst; she did not even look at him.

The man from the outer crust watched the trim, clean cut figure of the girl as she made her way toward the wood. He noted for the thousandth time the poise of that blond head, the almost regal carriage, the soft and graceful tread of the panther.

The man did not know what motivated him, he could not interpret the urges that seemed to possess him; something quite beyond reason, something that exhilarated one as might an inspiration, prompted him. He did not wish to reason it out; he wished merely to obey. He turned to Dangar.

"Good-by," he said.

"Good-by?" exclaimed Dangar. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to Lo-har with La-ja," replied von Horst.

DANGAR LOOKED at von Horst with surprise as the latter announced that he was going with La-ja. "Why?" he asked.

Von Horst shook his head. "I do not know," he replied. "I have one excellent reason, and that is that I could not see a girl go alone through this savage country, into that beastly

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

looking forest; but I know that there is something else, much deeper, that impels me; something as inexplicable and inescapable as instinct."

"I will come with you," said Dangar.

Von Horst shook his head. "No. Go on to Sari. If I live, I'll follow you later."

"You could never find Sari."

"With your help, I can."

"How can I help you if I am not with you?" demanded Dangar.

"You can blaze the trail. Put marks on trees. Place stones upon the ground, like this, showing the direction you are going." He placed some stones in a row pointing in the direction they had been going, forming an arrow. "Mostly you follow animal trails; so you will have only to indicate the places that you branch off from the main trails. If you will do these things, I can follow you. I shall blaze my trail from here to wherever I go; so that I can find my way back."

"I do not like to leave you," said Dangar.

"It is best," replied von Horst. "There is a girl waiting for you in Sari. There is no one waiting for me anywhere. We do not know how far it is to Laja's country. We might never reach it; we might never return if we did. It is best that you go on to Sari."

"Very well," said Dangar. "I shall be expecting you there. Good-by." He turned and started off down the little valley.

Von Horst watched him for a moment, thinking of the strange circumstances that had brought them together across five hundred thousand years; thinking also of the even more remarkable fact that they had found so much in common upon which to build an enduring friendship. He sighed and turned in the direction that La-ja had gone.

The girl was half way to the forest, swinging along easily with her chin up and never looking back. She looked so little against the background of that mighty forest, and so brave. Something very much like tears momentarily dimmed the man's eyes as he watched her; then he set out after her.

Something of what he was doing he realized, but not all. He knew that it was quite likely that he was following the girl into an untracked wilderness from which neither of them would ever emerge; and that he was cutting himself off, doubtlessly forever, from his only friend in all this savage world, from the chance to go to a country where he might live in comparative security and make new friends—and all this for a girl who shunned and snubbed him. But what he did not know was that Jason Gridley would eventually decide to remain in the inner world, when the rest of the expedition sailed for the north polar opening and the outer crust, and proceed to Sari, there to form an expedition to search for him. He did not know that he was quite probably throwing away this one chance for succor; but if he had known it, there is little likelihood that it would have altered his decision.

He overtook La-ja just at the edge of the forest. She had heard his footsteps behind her and had turned to see who or what was following her. She did not seem greatly surprised. In fact, it seemed to von Horst that nothing could surprise La-ja.

"What do you want?" she inquired.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I am going with you to Lo-har," he replied.

"The warriors of Lo-har will probably kill you when you get there," she prophesied cheerfully.

"I am going with you just the same," insisted von Horst.

"I did not ask you to come. You had better go back and go to Sari with Dangar."

"Listen to me, La-ja," he begged. "I cannot let you go alone, knowing the dangers you may have to face—wild beasts and savage men. I must go with you as long as there is no one else to go; so why can't we be friends? Why do you dislike me so? What have I done?"

"If you come with me it will have to be as though we were friends—just friends—whether we are friends or not," she replied, ignoring his last two queries. "Do you understand that—just as friends?"

"I understand," he said. "Have I ever asked more of you?"

"No." She rather snapped the word.

"Nor shall I. My only thought is for your safety. When you are among your own people, I shall leave you."

"If they don't kill you before you can escape," she reminded him.

"Why should they wish to kill me?" he demanded.

"You are a stranger; and we always kill strangers, so that they will not kill us—or nearly always.

Sometimes, if we have reason to like them very much we let them live; but Gaz will not like you. He will kill you if the others don't."

"Who is Gaz? Why should he wish to kill me?"

"Gaz is a great warrior, a mighty hunter; single-handed he has killed a ryth."

"I am not a ryth; so I still don't see why he should wish to kill me," insisted von Horst.

"He will not like it when he learns that we have been together for so many sleeps. He is a very jealous man."

"What is he to you?" demanded von Horst.

"He hoped to mate with me before I was captured by the Bastian. If he has not taken another mate, he will still wish to. Gaz has a very quick temper and a very bad one. He has killed many men. Often he kills them first and then inquires about them later. Thus has he killed many men whom he would not have killed had he taken the time to discover that they had not harmed him."

"Do you wish to mate with him?" asked von Horst.

She shrugged her shapely shoulders. "I must mate with some one, for I must bear sons that Lohar may have a chief when my father dies; and Laja would mate only with a mighty man. Gaz is a mighty man."

"I asked you if you wished to mate with him— do you love him, La-ja?"

"I do not love any one," she replied; "and, furthermore, it is none of your affair. You are always meddling and asking questions that do not concern you. Come, if you are coming with me. We cannot get to Lo-har by standing still talking nonsense."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"You will have to lead the way," he said. "I do not know where Lo-har lies."

They started on. "Where is your country?" she asked. "Perhaps it lies beyond Lo-har in the same direction. That would be fine for you, provided, of course, that you got out of Lo-har alive."

"I do not know where my country is," he admitted.

She knitted her brows and looked at him in astonishment. "You mean that you could not find your way home?" she demanded.

"Just that. I wouldn't have the faintest idea even in which direction to start."

"How strange," she commented. "I have never heard of any so stupid as that, other than the poor creatures whose heads are sick. They know nothing at all. I have seen a few such. They get that way from blows on the head. Once a boy I knew fell out of a tree and landed on his head. He was never right again. He used to think he was a tarag and go roaring and growling about on his hands and knees, but one day his father got tired of listening to him and killed him."

"Do you think I am like that boy?" asked von Horst.

"I have never seen you act like a tarag," she admitted; "but you do have very peculiar ways, and in many things you are very stupid."

Von Horst could not repress a smile, and the girl saw him. She appeared nettled. "Do you think it anything to laugh about?" she demanded. "Say, what are you doing? Why do you chop at so many trees with your knife? That is enough to make one think that there may be something the matter with your head."

"I am marking the trail that we pass," he explained, "so that I can find my way back after I leave you."

She seemed very interested. "Perhaps your head is not so sick after all," she said. "Even my father never thought of anything like that."

"He wouldn't have to if he can find his way about as easily as you Pellucidarians can," von Horst reminded her.

"Oh, it is not always so easy to find our way any place except to our own countries," she explained. "Take us anywhere in Pellucidar and we can find our way home, but we might not be able to find our way back again to the place we had been taken. With your method, we could. I shall have to tell this to my father."

As they penetrated more deeply into the forest, von Horst was impressed by its strangely somber and gloomy atmosphere. The dense foliage of the tree tops formed an unbroken roof above their heads, shutting out all direct rays of the sun. The result was a perpetual twilight, with a temperature considerably lower than any he had experienced in the open—the two combining to retard the growth of underbrush, so that the ground between the boles of the trees was almost bare of anything other than a carpet of dead leaves. What few plants had had the hardihood to withstand these conditions were almost colorless—unhealthy, grotesque appearing forms that but added to the melancholy aspect of the repellent wood.

From the moment that they entered the forest the ground rose rapidly until they were climbing a very considerable ascent; then they suddenly topped a ridge and descended

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

into a ravine, but the forest continued unbroken as far as they could see.

As La-ja crossed the ravine and started up the farther ascent, von Horst asked her why she didn't try to find an easier way by following the ravine down until they reached the end of the hills.

"I am following a straight line to Lo-har," she replied.

"But suppose you came to a sea?" he asked.

"I would go around it, of course," she replied; "but where I can go at all, I go in a straight line."

"I hope there are no Alps on our route," he remarked, half aloud.

"I do not know what Alps are," said La-ja, "but there will be plenty of other animals."

"There will have to be more animals than we have seen since we got into this wood," remarked von Horst, "if we are to eat. I haven't seen even so much as a bird."

"I have noticed that," replied La-ja. "I have also noticed that there are no fruits or nuts, nor any other edible thing. I do not like this forest. Perhaps it is the Forest of Death."

"What is the Forest of Death?"

"I have heard of it. My people speak of it. It lies down some distance from Lo-har. In it live a race of horrible people who are not like any other people. Perhaps this is it."

"Well, we haven't seen anything so far that could harm us," von Horst reassured her.

They had climbed out of the ravine and were on more level ground. The forest seemed even denser than it had been farther back. Only a dim, diffused light relieved the darkness.

Suddenly La-ja stopped. "What was that?" she asked in a whisper. "Did you see it?"

"I saw something move, but I did not see what it was," replied the man. "It disappeared among the trees ahead of us and to the right. Is that what you saw?"

"Yes. It was right over there." She pointed. "I do not like this forest. I do not know why, but it is as though it were vile—unclean."

Von Horst nodded. "It is eerie. I shall be glad when we are well out of it."

"There!" exclaimed La-ja. "There it is again. It is all white. What could it be?"

"I don't know. I just had the briefest glimpse of it; but I thought—I thought it was something almost human. It is so dark in here that it is difficult to discern objects clearly unless one is very close to them."

They walked on in silence, keeping a sharp lookout in all directions; and von Horst noticed that the girl remained very close to him. Often her shoulder touched his breast as though she sought the reassurance of personal contact. He was doubly glad now that he had insisted upon coming with her. He knew that she would not admit that she was frightened; and he would not suggest it, but he knew that she was frightened. For some inexplicable reason—inexplicable to him—he was glad that she was. Perhaps it satisfied the protective instinct in him. Perhaps it made her seem more feminine, and von Horst liked feminine women.

They had gone some little distance from the point at which they had seen the mysterious creature moving among the trees, without seeing any other suggestion of life in the forest, when they were startled by a series of shrieks, mingled with which were roars

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and a strange hissing sound. They both stopped, and La-ja pressed close to von Horst. He felt her tremble ever so slightly; and threw an arm about her, reassuringly. The sounds were coming rapidly closer. The screams, sounding strangely human, were filled with terror and despair, rising to a piercing crescendo of fright. Then the author of them burst into view—a naked man, his face distorted by terror. And such a man! His skin was a dead white, without life or beauty; and his hair was white. Two great canine tusks curved downward to his chin, the pink irises of his eyes surrounded blood-red pupils to make an already repellent countenance still further hideous.

Behind him, hissing and roaring, galloped a small dinosaur. It was not much larger than a Shetland pony; but its appearance might easily have caused even the bravest of men misgivings, so similar was it in everything but size to the mighty *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, the king of the tyrant reptiles of the Cretaceous.

At sight of La-ja and von Horst, the dinosaur veered suddenly in their direction and came hissing and roaring down upon them like a steam locomotive gone amuck. So close was it that there was not even time to seek safety behind a tree; and von Horst's reaction was the natural and almost mechanical one of a man of his training. He whipped his revolver from its holster and fired; then he leaped quickly out of the path of the charging brute, dragging La-ja with him.

The dinosaur, badly hit, roared with rage, nearly going down. As it stumbled past him, the man fired again, placing a heavy .45 slug just behind the left shoulder. This time the beast fell; but knowing the remarkable life tenacity of the reptilia, von Horst was not over confident that all danger was past. Grasping La-ja by a hand, he ran quickly to the nearest tree, behind the bole of which they sought concealment. Above them and out of reach were the lowest branches—a perfect sanctuary that they could not gain. If the two bullets had not permanently stopped the dinosaur, their principal hope lay in the possibility that after it regained its feet, if it did not immediately see them it would go blundering off in the wrong direction.

From behind the tree, von Horst watched the beast pawing up the matted vegetation as it sought to regain its feet. He could see that it was far from dead, although badly hit. La-ja pressed close to him. He could feel her heart beating against his side. It was a tense moment as the dinosaur finally staggered up. For a moment it swayed as though about to fall again; then it swung slowly about in a circle, its muzzle raised, sniffing the air. Presently it started in their direction—slowly, cautiously. Its appearance now seemed far more menacing to von Horst than had its mad charge. It gave the impression of being a cold, calculating, efficient engine of destruction, an animated instrument of revenge that would demand an eye for an eye and not give up the ghost until vengeance had been achieved. It was coming straight toward the tree behind which they were hiding. Whether it had discovered the small portion of von Horst's head that was revealed beyond the edge of the bole, the man did not know; but it was certainly coming toward them guided either by sight or by scent.

It was a tense moment for von Horst. For the instant he was uncertain as to what he should do. Then he decided. Leaning close to La-ja, he whispered, "The beast is coming. Run for that tree behind us, keeping this tree between you and the beast, so that it does not see you; then keep going from one tree to another until you are safely away. When it

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

is dead I will call to you.”

“And what will you do? Will you come with me?”

“I’ll wait here to make sure that it dies,” he replied. “I can give it a few more shots if necessary.”

She shook her head. “No.”

“Hurry!” he urged. “It is quite close. It is looking for us.”

“I shall remain here with you,” said La-ja with finality.

From her tone of voice he knew that there was nothing more to be said. From past experience he knew his La-ja. With a shrug, he gave up the argument; then he looked out once more to see the dinosaur within a few paces of the tree.

Suddenly he leaped from behind the tree and started on a run across the front of the beast. He had acted so quickly that La-ja was stunned to inaction by surprise. But not the dinosaur. It did just what von Horst had hoped and believed it would. With a bellow of rage, it took after him. Thus he drew it away from the girl. This accomplished, he turned and faced the brute. Standing his ground, he fired rapidly from his automatic, placing his bullets in the broad chest. Yet the thing came on.

Von Horst emptied his weapon; the dinosaur was almost upon him; he saw La-ja running rapidly toward him, as though in an effort to divert the charge of the infuriated reptile with the comparatively puny spear that she carried. He tried to leap aside from the path of the charging beast, but it was too close. It rose upon its hind feet and struck at his head with a taloned fore paw, felling him, unconscious, to the ground.

VON HORST experienced a sensation of peace and well being. He was vaguely aware that he was awakening from a long and refreshing sleep. He did not open his eyes. He was so comfortable that there seemed no reason to do so, but rather to court a continuance of the carefree bliss he was enjoying.

This passive rapture was rudely interrupted by a growing realization that his head ached. With returning consciousness his nervous system awoke to the fact that he was far from comfortable. The sensation of peace and well being faded as the dream it was. He opened his eyes and looked up into the face of Laja, bending solicitously close above his own. His head was pillowed in her lap. She was stroking his forehead with a soft palm.

“You are all right, Von?” she whispered. “You will not die?”

He smiled up at her, wryly. “O Death! Where is thy sting?” he apostrophized.

“It didn’t sting you,” La-ja assured him; “it hit you with its paw.”

Von Horst grinned. “My head feels as though it had hit me with a sledge hammer. Where is it? What became of it?” He turned his head painfully to one side and saw the dinosaur laying motionless near them.

“It died just as it struck you,” explained the girl. “You are a very brave man, Von.”

“You are a very brave girl,” he retorted. “I saw you running in to help me. You should not have done that.”

“Could I have stood and watched you being killed when you had deliberately drawn the charge of the zarith upon yourself to save me?”

“So that is a zarith?”

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Yes, a baby zarith," replied the girl. "It is well for us that it was not a full grown one, but of course one would never meet a full grown zarith in a forest."

"No? Why not?"

"For one reason they are too big; and, then, they couldn't find any food here. A full grown zarith is eight times as long as a man is tall. It couldn't move around easily among all these trees; and when it stood up on its hind feet, it'd bump its head on the branches. They kill thags and tandors and other large game that seldom enters the forests—at least not forests like this one."

Von Horst whistled softly to himself as he tried to visualize a reptile nearly fifty feet in length that fed on the great Bos, the progenitors of modern cattle, and upon the giant mammoth. "Yes," he soliloquized, "I imagine it's just as well that we ran into Junior instead of papa. But, say, La-ja, what became of that man-thing the zarith was chasing?"

"He never stopped running. I saw him looking back after you made the loud noise with that thing you call peestol, but he did not stop. He should have come back to help you, I think; though he must have thought that you were sick in the head not to run. It takes a very brave man not to run from a zarith."

"There wasn't any place to run. If there had been, I'd still be running."

"I do not believe that," said La-ja. "Gaz would have run, but not you."

"You like me a little better, La-ja?" he asked. He was starved for friendship—for even the friendship of this savage little girl of the stone age.

"No," said La-ja, emphatically. "I do not like you at all, but I know a brave man when I see one."

"Why don't you like me, La-ja?" he asked a little wistfully. "I like you. I like you—a lot." He hesitated. How much did he like her?

"I don't like you because you are sick in the head, for one thing; for another, you are not of my tribe; furthermore, you try to order me around as though I belonged to you."

"I'm sure sick in the head now," he admitted; "but that doesn't effect my good disposition or my other sterling qualities, and I can't help not being a member of your tribe. You can't hold that against me. It was just a mistake on the part of my father and mother in not having been born in Pellucidar; and really you can't blame them for that, especially when you consider that they never even heard of the place. And, La-ja, as for ordering you around; I never do it except for your own good."

"And I don't like the way you talk sometimes, with a silent laugh behind your words. I know that you are laughing at me—making fun of me because you think that the world you came from is so much better than Pellucidar—that its people have more brains."

"Don't you think that you will ever learn to like me?" he asked, quite solemn now.

"No," she said; "you will be dead before I could have time."

"Gaz, I suppose, will attend to that?" he inquired.

"Gaz, or some other of my people. Do you think you could stand now?"

"I am very comfortable," he said. "I have never had such a nice pillow."

She took his head, quite gently, and laid it on the ground; then she stood up. "You are always laughing at me with words," she said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

He rose to his feet. "With you, La-ja; never at you." he said.

She looked at him steadily as though meditating his words. She was attempting, he was sure, to conjure some uncomplimentary double meaning from them; but she made no comment.

"Do you think you can walk?" was all that she said.

"I don't feel much like dancing even a saraband," he replied, "but I think I can walk all right. Come on, lead the way to Lo-har and the lightsome Gaz."

They resumed their journey deeper into the gloomy wood, speaking seldom as they toiled up the steep ascents that constantly confronted them. At length they came to a sheer cliff that definitely blocked their further progress in a straight line. Laja turned to the left and followed along its foot. As she did not hesitate or seem in the slightest doubt, von Horst asked her why she turned to the left instead of to the right. "Do you know the shortest way when you cannot go in a straight line?" he asked.

"No," she admitted; "but when one does not know and cannot follow one's head, then one should always turn to the left and follow one's heart."

He nodded, comprehendingly. "Not a bad idea," he said. "At least it saves one from useless speculation." He glanced up the face of the cliff, casually measuring its height with his eyes. He saw the same great trees of the forest growing close to the edge, indicating that the forest continued on beyond; and he saw something else—just a fleeting glimpse of something moving, but he was sure that he recognized it. "We are being watched," he said.

La-ja glanced up. "You saw something?" she asked.

He nodded. "It looked like our white-haired friend, or another just like him."

"He was not our friend," remonstrated the literal La-ja.

"I was laughing with words, as you say," he explained.

"I wish that I liked you," said La-ja.

He looked at her in surprise. "I wish that you did, but why do you wish it?"

"I would like to like a man who can laugh in the face of danger," she replied.

"Well, please try; but do you really think that fellow is dangerous? He didn't look very dangerous when we saw him presenting the freedom of the forest to the zarith."

She knit her brows and looked at him with a puzzled expression. "Sometimes you seem quite like other people," she said; "and then you say something, and I realize that your head is very sick."

Von Horst laughed aloud. "I opine that the twentieth century brand of humor doesn't go so well in the Pleistocene."

"There you go again!" she snapped. "Even my father, who is very wise, would not know what you were talking about half the time."

As they moved along the foot of the cliff, they kept constantly alert for any further sign that they were being watched or followed.

"What makes you think that this white-haired man is dangerous?" he asked.

"He alone might not be dangerous to us: but where there is one there must be a tribe, and any tribe of strange people would be dangerous to us. We are in their country.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

They know the places where they might most easily set upon us and kill us. We do not know what is just beyond the range of our vision.

"If this is the Forest of Death, the people who dwell here are dangerous because they are not as other men. I have heard it said. None of my people who are living has ever been here, but stories handed down from father to son tell of strange things that have happened in the Forest of Death. My people are brave people, but none of them would go to that forest. There are things in Pellucidar that warriors cannot fight with weapons. It is known that there are such things in the Forest of Death. If we are indeed in it, we shall never live to reach Lo-har."

"Poor Gaz!" exclaimed von Horst.

"What do you mean?"

"I am sorry for him because he will not have the pleasure of killing me or taking you for his mate."

She looked at him in disgust, continuing on in silence. They both watched for signs of the trailers they were sure were following them; but no sound broke the deathly silence of the wood, nor did they see aught to confirm their suspicions; so at length they decided that whatever it was they had seen at the cliff top had departed and would not molest them.

They came to the mouth of a cave in the cliff; and as they had not slept for some time, von Horst suggested that they go in and rest. His head still ached, and he felt the need of sleep. The mouth of the cave was quite small, making it necessary for von Horst to get down on his hands and knees and crawl in to investigate. He shoved his spear in ahead of him and felt around with it to assure himself that no animal was lairing in the darkness of the interior as well as to discover if the cave were large enough to accommodate them.

Having satisfied himself on both these points, he entered the cave; and a moment later La-ja joined him. A cursory exploration assured them that the cave ran back some little distance into the cliff, but as they were only interested in enough space wherein to sleep they lay down close to the entrance. Von Horst lay with his head to the opening, his spear ready to thrust at any intruder that might awaken him. La-ja lay a few feet from him farther back in the cave. It was very dark and quiet. A gentle draft of fresh air came through the entrance dispelling the damp and musty odors which von Horst had come to expect in caves. Soon they were asleep.

When von Horst awoke, his head no longer ached; and he felt much refreshed. He turned over on his back and stretched, yawning.

"You are awake?" asked La-ja.

"Yes. Are you rested?"

"Entirely. I just woke up."

"Hungry?"

"Yes, and thirsty, too," she admitted.

"Let's get started, then," he suggested. "It looks as though we'd have to get out of this forest before we find food."

"All right," she said, "but what makes it so dark out?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Von Horst got to his knees and faced the entrance to the cave. He could see nothing. Even the gloom of the forest had been blotted out. He thought it possible that he had become turned around in his sleep and was looking in the wrong direction, but no matter which way he turned he was confronted always by the same impenetrable blackness. Then he crawled forward, feeling with his hands. Where he had thought the entrance to be he found the rounded surface of a large boulder. He felt around its edges, discovering loose dirt.

"The entrance has been blocked up, La-ja," he said.

"But what could have done it without awakening us?" she demanded.

"I don't know," he admitted, "but in some way the mouth of the cave has been filled with a boulder and loose dirt. There isn't a breath of air coming in as there was when we entered."

He tried to push the boulder away, but he could not budge it. Then he started to scrape away the loose dirt, but what he scraped away was replaced by more sifting in from the outside. La-ja came to his side and they exerted their combined weight and strength in an effort to move the boulder, but to no avail.

"We are penned up here like rats in a trap," said von Horst in deep disgust.

"And with our air supply shut off we'll suffocate if we don't find some way to get out."

"There must be another opening," said von Horst.

"What makes you think so?" asked the girl.

"Don't you recall that when we came in there was a draft of air entering from the outside?" he asked.

"Yes, that's right; there was."

"Well, if the air came in this entrance in a draft, it must have gone out some other opening; and if we can find that opening, perhaps we can get out, too."

"Do you suppose the white-haired man and his people blocked the entrance?" asked La-ja.

"I imagine so," replied von Horst. "It must have been men of some kind; no animal could have done it so quietly as not to have awakened us; and, of course, for the same reason, an earthquake is out

of the question."

"I wonder why they did it?" mused the girl.

"Probably an easy and safe way to kill strangers who come to their country," suggested von Horst.

"Just let us starve to death or suffocate," said the girl in disgust. "Only cowards would do that."

"I'll bet Gaz would never do anything like that," said von Horst.

"Gaz? He has killed many men with his bare hands. Sometimes he bites the great vein in their neck and they bleed to death, and once he pushed a man's head back until he broke his neck."

"What a nice little play fellow!"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Gaz never plays. He loves to kill—that is his play."

"Well, if I'm going to meet him, I'll have to get out of here. Let's follow the cave back and see if we can find the other opening. Stay close behind me."

Von Horst rose slowly to gauge the height of the cave and found that they could stand erect; then he groped his way cautiously toward the rear, touching a wall with one hand. He moved very slowly, feeling ahead with each foot for solid ground before he planted it. They had not gone far when von Horst felt what appeared to be twigs and leaves beneath his feet. He stooped and felt of them. They were dry branches with dead leaves still clinging to them and long thick grasses. The floor of the cave here was strewn thickly with them.

"Must have been a sleeping place for some animal or perhaps for men," he suggested. "I wish we had a light; I don't like groping along in the dark like this."

"I have my fire stones," said La-ja. "If we had some tinder, I could light a bundle of these grasses."

"I'll make some," said von Horst.

He stooped and cleared a place on the floor, exposing the bare ground; then he gathered some of the dried leaves and powdered them between his palms, making a little pile of the tinder on the bare ground.

"Come and try it, now," he said. "Here," he guided her hand to the tinder.

La-ja knelt beside him and struck her fire stones together close above the little a single fragment, and it commenced to glow. La-ja bent low and blew gently upon it. Suddenly it burst into flame. Von Horst was ready with a bundle of the grasses he had gathered for the purpose, and a moment later he held a blazing torch in his hand.

In the light of the torch they looked about them. They were in a large chamber formed by the widening of the cave. The floor was littered with twigs and grasses among which were a number of gnawed bones. Whether it was the den of beasts or men, von Horst could not tell; but from the presence of the bedding he judged that it was the latter. Yet there was no article of cast-off clothing, no broken or discarded weapon or tool that he could find, no potsherds. If men had dwelt here they must have been of a very low order.

Before their torch burned low they gathered grasses and made a quantity of them, and thus supplied with the assurance of light for a considerable time they continued on through the large chamber into a narrow corridor that wound and twisted into the heart of the escarpment. Presently they came to another even larger chamber. This, too, bore evidence of having been inhabited; but the relics here were of a grisly nature. The floor was strewn with the bones and skulls of human beings. A foul odor of decaying flesh permeated the air of this subterranean charnel chamber.

"Let's get out of here," said von Horst.

"There are three openings beside the one we came in," said La-ja. "Which one shall we take?"

Von Horst shook his head. "We may have to try them all," he said. "Let's start with the one farthest on our right. It may be as good a guess as any; and at best it's only a guess, no matter which one we decide on."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

As they approached the opening they were almost overpowered by the stench that came from it, but von Horst was determined to investigate every possible avenue of escape; so he stepped through the opening into a smaller chamber. The sight that met his eyes brought him to a sudden halt. A dozen human corpses were piled against the far wall of the chamber. A single glance showed von Horst that there was no outer opening leading from the room; so he beat a hasty retreat.

One of the two remaining openings from the large chamber was smoke blackened, and on the floor of the cave just in front of it were the ashes and charcoal of many wood fires. Its appearance gave von Horst an idea. He walked to the second opening and held his smoking torch close to it, but the smoke rose steadily; then he went to that before which fires had been built, and now the smoke from his torch was drawn steadily into the opening.

"This one must lead to the outer opening," he said, "and it also served as a chimney when they cooked their feasts. Nice lot, whoever they are that inhabit these caves. I think I prefer Gaz. We'll try this one, La-ja."

A narrow corridor rose steeply. It was blackened with soot, and the draft that wafted continually up it was laden with the stench from the horror chambers below.

"It can't be far to the top," said von Horst. "The cliff didn't look more than fifty feet high, and we have been climbing a little all the time since we first entered the cave."

"It's getting light ahead," said La-ja.

"Yes, there's the opening!" exclaimed von Horst.

Ten feet from the surface they passed the openings to two corridors or chambers, one on either side of the shaft they were ascending; but so engrossed were they in escaping from the foul air that surrounded them that they scarce noticed them. Nor did they see the forms lurking in the darkness just within.

La-ja was just behind von Horst. It was she who discovered the danger first—but too late. She saw hands reach out of one of the openings just as von Horst passed it, seize him, and drag him in. She voiced a cry of warning, and at the same instant she was seized and drawn into the opening on the opposite side.

VON HOEST struggled and fought to free himself. He shouted aloud to La-ja to run to the opening they had seen ahead of them and make her escape. He did not know that she, too, had been captured. It seemed that a dozen hands clung to each of his arms, and though he was a powerful man he could neither escape nor wrench his arm free long enough to draw his pistol. His spear had been snatched from him at the moment of his seizure.

It was very dark in the corridor down which he was being dragged along a steep declivity; so that he could not see whether they were men or beasts that had captured him. Yet, though they did not speak, he was sure that they were men. Presently, at a sudden turning of the corridor, they came into a lighted chamber—a vast subterranean room illuminated by many torches. And here von Horst saw the nature of the creatures into whose hands he had fallen. They were of the same race as the man he had seen fleeing from the zarith. They were mostly men; but there were a few women among them and perhaps a dozen children. All had white skins, white hair, and the pink and red eyes

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of Albinos, which in themselves are not disgusting. It was the bestial, brutal faces of these creatures that made them appear so horrible.

Most of the assemblage, which must have numbered several hundred people, sat or squatted or lay near the wall of the roughly circular chamber, leaving a large open space in the center. To this space von Horst was dragged; then he was thrown to the ground, his hands tied behind his back, and his ankles secured.

As he lay on his side, taking in all that he could see of the repulsive concourse, his heart suddenly sank. From the mouth of a corridor opposite that through which he had been brought into the chamber he saw La-ja being dragged. They brought her to the open space where he lay and bound her as they had bound him. The two lay facing one another. Von Horst tried to smile, but there was not much heart in it. From what he had seen of these people and what he had guessed of their customs, he could draw no slightest ray of hope that they might escape a fate similar to that of those whose ghastly remains they had seen in those other two chambers of the cave.

"It looks like a hard winter," he said.

"Winter? What is winter?" she asked.

"It is the time of year—oh, but then you don't even know what a year is. What's the use? Let's talk about something else."

"Why do we have to talk?"

"I don't know why I have to, but I do. Ordinarily I'm not a very loquacious person, but right now I've got to talk or go crazy."

"Be careful what you say, then," she whispered, "if you are thinking of talking of a way to escape."

"Do you suppose these things can understand us?" he demanded.

"Yes, we can understand you," said one of the creatures standing near them, in hollow, sepulchral tones.

"Then tell us why you captured us. What are you going to do with us?"

The fellow bared his yellowed teeth in a soundless laugh. "He asks what we are going to do with them," he announced in loud tones that were none the less suggestive of the grave because of their loudness.

The audience rocked with silent mirth. "What are we going to do with them?" echoed several, and then they went off into gales of hideous, mirthless laughter that was as silent as the tomb.

"If they want to know, let's show them now," suggested one.

"Yes, Torp," said another, "now, now."

"No," said he who had been addressed as Torp, the same fellow who had originally spoken to von Horst. "We already have plenty, many of which have aged too long as it is." He stepped closer to the prisoners; and, stooping, pinched their flesh, digging a filthy forefinger between their ribs. "They need fattening," he announced. "We shall feed them for a while. Plenty of nuts and a little fruit will put a layer of juicy fat on their ribs." He rubbed his palms together and licked his flabby lips. "Some of you take them away and put them in that little room over there, get nuts and fruit for them; and keep

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

them there until they get fat.”

As he finished speaking, another of the creatures entered the room from one of the runways that led above. He was very much excited as he ran into the center of the cavern.

“What’s the matter with you, Durg?” demanded Torp.

“I was chased by a zarith,” exclaimed Durg, “but that is not all. A strange gilak with a woman made many loud noises with a little black stick, and the zarith fell down and died. The strange gilak saved Durg’s life; but why, I do not know.”

The men who had gathered about von Horst and La-ja to take them to the chamber in which they were to be fattened had removed the thongs from their ankles and dragged them to their feet just as Durg finished his story; so that he saw them now for the first time.

“There they are!” he exclaimed excitedly. “There is the same gilak that saved Durg’s life. What are you going to do with them, Torp?”

“They are going to be fattened,” replied Torp; “they are too thin.”

“You should let them go, because they saved my life,” urged Durg.

“Should I let them go because the man is a fool?” demanded Torp. “If he had any sense he would have killed and eaten you. Take them away.”

“He saved a Gorbust!” cried Durg, addressing the assembled tribe. “Should we let him be killed for that? I say, let them go free.”

“Let them go!” cried a few, but there were more who shrieked, “Fatten them! Fatten them!”

As the men were pushing them toward the entrance to the chamber in which they were to be confined, von Horst saw Durg facing Torp angrily.

“Some day I am going to kill you,” threatened the former. “We need a good chief. You are no good.”

“I am chief,” screamed Torp. “It is I who will kill you.”

“You?” demanded Durg with disgust. “You are only a killer of women. You murdered seven of them. You never murdered a man. I murdered four.”

“You poisoned them,” sneered Torp.

“I did not!” shrieked Durg. “I killed three of them with a cleaver and stabbed the other with a dagger.”

“In the back?” asked Torp.

“No, not in the back, you woman killer.”

As von Horst was pushed from the large cavern into the darkness of the small one that adjoined it the two Gorbusts were still quarrelling; and as the European meditated upon what he had heard, he was struck not so much by the gruesomeness of their words as by Durg’s use of two English words— cleaver and dagger.

This was sufficiently remarkable in itself, and even more so coming from the lips of a member of a tribe that was apparently so low in the scale of evolution that they had no weapons of any description. How could Durg know what a dagger was? How could he ever have heard of a cleaver? And where did he learn the English words for them? Von

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Horst could discover no explanation of the mystery.

The Gorbuses left them in the smaller cave without bothering to secure their ankles again, though they left their hands tied behind them. There were leaves and grasses on the floor, and the two prisoners made themselves as comfortable as they could. The torch-light from the larger cave relieved the gloom of their prison cell, permitting them to see one another dimly as they sat on the musty bedding that littered the floor.

"What are we going to do now?" demanded La-ja.

"I don't know of anything that we can do right now," replied the man, "but it appears that later on we are going to be eaten—when we are fatter. If they feed us well we should do our best to get fat. We must certainly leave a good impression behind us when we go."

"That is stupid," snapped the girl. "Your head must be very sick indeed to think of anything so stupid."

"Perhaps 'thick' would be a better word," laughed von Horst. "Do you know, La-ja, it is just too bad."

"What is too bad?"

"That you have no sense of humor," he replied. "We could have a much better time if you had."

"I never know when you are serious and when you are laughing with words," she said. "If you will tell me when the things you say are supposed to be funny, perhaps I can laugh at them."

"You win, La-ja," the man assured her.

"Win what?" she demanded.

"My apology and my esteem—you have a sense of humor, even though you don't know it."

"You said a moment ago," said La-ja, "that you didn't know of anything that we could do right now. Don't you wish to escape, or would you rather stay here and get eaten?"

"Of course I'd prefer escaping," replied von Horst, "but I don't see any possibility of it at present while all those creatures are in the big cave."

"What have you got that thing you call peestol for?" demanded La-ja, not without a note of derision. "You killed a zarith with it. You could much more easily kill these Gorbuses; then we could escape easily."

"There are too many of them, La-ja," he replied.

"If I fired away all my ammunition, I could not possibly kill enough of them to make escape certain; furthermore my hands are tied behind me. But even were they free, I'd wait to the very last moment before attempting it."

"You have no way of knowing it, La-ja; but when I have used up all these shiny little things tucked in my belt, the pistol will be of no more use to me; for I can never get any more of them. Therefore, I must be very careful not to waste them."

"However, you may rest assured that before I'll let 'em eat either one of us, I'll do a little shooting. My hope is that they will be so surprised and frightened by the reports

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

that they'll fall over one another in their efforts to escape."

As he ceased speaking, a Gorbis entered their little cave. It was Durg. He carried a small torch which illuminated the interior, revealing the rough walls, the litter of leaves and grasses, the two figures lying uncomfortably with bound hands.

Durg looked them over in silence for a moment; then he squatted on the floor near them. "Torp is a stubborn fool," he said in his hollow voice. "He ought to set you free, but he won't. He's made up his mind that we're going to eat you, and I guess we shall.

"It's too bad though. No one ever saved a Gorbis's life before; it was unheard of. If I had been chief, I would have let you go."

"Maybe you can help us anyway," suggested von Horst.

"How?" asked Durg.

"Show us how we can escape."

"You can't escape," Durg assured him emphatically.

"Those people don't stay in that other cave all the time, do they?" demanded the European.

"If they go away, Torp will leave a guard here to see that you don't get away."

Von Horst mused for a moment. Finally he looked up at their grotesque visitor. "You'd like to be chief, wouldn't you?" he demanded.

"S-s-sh!" cautioned Durg. "Don't let anyone hear you say that. But how did you know?"

"I know many things," replied von Horst in a whisper, mysteriously.

Durg eyed him half fearfully. "I knew that you were not as other gilaks," he said. "You are different. Perhaps you are from that other life, that other world, of which Gorbuses get fleeting glimpses out of the dim background of almost forgotten memories. Yes, they are forgotten; and yet there are always reminders of them constantly tormenting us. Tell me—who are you? From whence came you?"

"I am called Von; and I come from the outer world—from a world very different from this one."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Durg. "It must be that there is another world. Once we Gorbuses lived in it. It was a happy world; but because of what we did we were sent away from it to live here in this dark forest, miserable and unhappy."

"I do not understand," said von Horst. "You didn't come from my world; there is no one like you there."

"We were different there," said Durg. "We all feel that we were different. To some the memories are more distinct than to others, but they are never wholly clear. We get fleeting glimpses that are blurred and dim and that fade quickly before we can decipher them or fix them definitely in our memories. It is only those that we murdered that we see clearly—we see them and the way that we murdered them; but we do not see ourselves as we were then, except rarely; and then the visions are only hazy suggestions. But we know that we were not as we are here. It is tantalizing; it drives us almost to madness—never quite to see, never quite to recall.

"I can see the three that I killed with the cleaver— my father and two older brothers—I did it that I might get something they had; I do not know what. They stood in my

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

way. I murdered them. Now I am a naked Gorbus feeding on human bodies. Some of us think that thus we are punished."

"What do you know about cleavers?" asked von Horst, now much interested in the weird recital and its various implications.

"I know nothing of cleavers except that it was with a cleaver I killed my father and my two brothers. With a dagger, I stabbed a man. I do not know why. I can see him—his pain distorted features clearly, the rest of him very vaguely. He had on blue clothes with shiny buttons. Ah, now he has faded away—all but his face. He is glaring at me. I almost had something then— clothes, buttons! What are they? I almost knew—now they are gone. What were the words? What words did I just say? They have gone, too. It is ever thus. We are plagued by half pictures that are snatched away from us immediately."

"You all suffer thus?" asked von Horst.

"Yes," said Durg. "We all see those we have murdered; those are the only memories that we retain permanently."

"You are all murderers?"

"Yes. I am one of the best. Torp's seven women are nothing. Some he killed while they were embracing him with love—he smothered them or choked them. One he strangled with her own hair. He is always bragging about that one."

"Why did he kill them?" demanded La-ja.

"He wished something that they had. It was thus with all of us. I can't imagine what it was I wished when I killed my father and brothers, nor what any of the others wished. Whatever it was, we didn't get it; for we have nothing here. The only thing we ever crave is food, and we have plenty of that. Anyway, no one would kill for food. It gives no satisfaction. It is nauseating. We eat because if we didn't we believe that we would die and go to a worse place than this. We are afraid of that."

"You don't enjoy eating?" asked von Horst. "What do you enjoy?"

"Nothing. There is no happiness in the Forest of Death. There are cold and hopelessness and nausea and fear. Oh, yes; there is hate. We hate one another. Perhaps we get some satisfaction from that, but not a great deal. We are all hating, and you can't get a great deal of pleasure doing what every one else is doing.

"I derived a little pleasure from wishing to set you free—that was different; that was unique. It is the first pleasure I have ever had. Of course I am not certain just what pleasure is, but I thought I recognized the sensation as pleasure because while I was experiencing it I forgot all about cold and hopelessness and nausea and fear. Anything that makes one forget must be a pleasure."

"You are all murderers?" asked La-ja.

"We have each killed something," replied Durg. "Do you see that old woman sitting over there with her face in her hands? She killed the happiness of two people. She remembers it quite clearly. A man and a woman. They loved each other very much. All that they asked was to be left alone and allowed to be happy.

"And that man standing just beyond her. He killed something more beautiful than life. Love. He killed his wife's love."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Yes, each of us has killed something; but I am glad that it was men that I killed and not happiness or love."

"Perhaps you are right," said von Horst. "There are far too many men in the world but not half enough happiness or love."

A sudden commotion in the outer cave interrupted further conversation. Durg jumped to his feet and left them; and von Horst and La-ja, looking out, saw two prisoners being dragged into the cavern.

"More food for the larder," remarked the man.

"And they don't even enjoy eating it," said Laja. "I wonder if what Durg told us is true—about the murders, I mean, and the other life they half recall."

Von Horst shook his head. "I don't know; but if it is, it answers a question that has been bothering generations of men of the outer crust."

"Look," said La-ja. "They are bringing the prisoners this way."

"To the fattening pen," said von Horst with a grin.

"One of them is a very big man, is he not?" remarked La-ja. "It takes many Gorbuses to force him along."

"That fellow looks familiar to me," said von Horst. "Not the big one—the other. There are so many Gorbuses around them that I can't get a good look at either of them."

The new prisoners were brought to the smaller cave and thrust in roughly, so that they almost fell upon the two already there. The larger man was blustering and threatening; the other whined and complained. In the semidarkness of the interior it was impossible to distinguish the features of either.

They paid no attention to von Horst or La-ja although they must have been aware of their presence; yet the former felt certain that the loud bragging of the larger man must be for the purpose of impressing them, as the Gorbuses had departed; and the fellow's companion did not appear to be the type that any one would wish to impress. He was quite evidently a coward and in a blue funk of terror. He was almost gibbering with fright as he bemoaned the fate that had ever brought him to the Forest of Death; but the other man paid no attention to him, each rambling on quite independently of the other.

As von Horst, half amused, listened to them, several Gorbuses approached the cave, bearing fruits and nuts. One of them carried a torch, the light from which illuminated the interior of the cave as the fellow entered; and in the flickering light, the faces of the prisoners were revealed to each other.

"You?" fairly screamed the big fellow who had been blustering, as his eyes fell upon von Horst. It was Frug, and his companion was Skruf.

As THE FULL significance of the situation revealed itself to von Horst, he was of two minds as to whether he should laugh or curse. Their predicament had been bad enough before, but with the presence of these two it might be infinitely worse. Frug's reaction when he recognized them augured no good. However, if the situation was menacing it was also amusing; and von Horst smiled as he contemplated the excitement of the massive cave man.

"And the girl, too!" exclaimed Skruf.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Yes," said von Horst, "it is indeed we. To what do we owe the pleasure of this unexpected visit? We had thought of you as being safely beside the home fires of Basti cooking your meat, and here you are waiting to be cooked as some one else's meat! Ah, but is not life filled with surprises? Some pleasurable, some—er—not so pleasurable."

"If I could break these bonds and get my hands on you!" shouted Frug.

"Yes? What would you do then, my man?" inquired von Horst.

"I'd break your neck; I'd pound your face to a pulp; I'd—"

"Wait," begged von Horst. "Permit me to suggest a different order of procedure. If you were to break my neck first, as you intimate is your intention, you would derive little pleasure from beating my face to a pulp, as I should be dead and therefore unable to appreciate what you were doing to me. Really, Frug, you are not very bright. I cannot conceive how a person of such limited intelligence ever came to be chosen chief of Basti, but perhaps you were chosen because of the circumference of your biceps rather than for that of your cranium."

The Gorbuses had dumped a quantity of fruit and nuts upon the floor of the cave and departed, leaving the cavern again in semidarkness. Frug was still struggling with his bonds. Skruf was whimpering and moaning. Von Horst was contemplating the food. "We can negotiate the softer fruit with our hands tied behind us," he remarked to La-ja, "but how do they expect us to crack the shells of some of those nuts."

"Perhaps we can free our hands," suggested the girl. "Roll over close to me, with your back against mine; then try to untie the thongs that bind my wrists. If you can free me, I can easily free you."

She had spoken in a low whisper lest Frug or Skruf hear and act upon the suggestion before she and von Horst were free. The European wriggled his body into position behind that of the girl; then he fell to work upon the knots at her wrists. It was a slow process, partially because he could not see what he was doing and partially because of the limited use he had of his hands; but after what seemed an eternity he felt a knot loosening. With practice he became more adept, and soon the second knot gave to his perseverance. There were several more; but eventually the last one succumbed, and La-ja's hands were free. Immediately she rolled over, facing his back; and he could feel her nimble fingers searching out the secret of the knots. When she touched his hands or arms he experienced a strange thrill that was new to him. He had felt the contact of her flesh before but always then she had been angry and resentful, sometimes violently so; and he had experienced no pleasurable reaction. Now it was different; because, for the first time, she was ministering to him and of her own free will.

"What are you two doing?" demanded Frug. "You are very quiet. If you think you are going to eat all the food they brought, I'll tell you you'd better not. I'll kill you if you try that."

"Before or after you break my neck?" asked von Horst.

"Before, of course," snapped Frug. "No, after. No—what difference does it make? You talk like a fool."

"And after you have killed me and broken my neck, or broken my neck and killed me, in whichever order you finally decide to precede, you and Skruf will undoubtedly

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eat the food. Am I right?"

"Of course you're right," growled Frug.

"And do you know the purpose for which the food is intended?" inquired von Horst.

"For us to eat, of course."

"But why should they care whether or not we eat?" asked the European. "Are you laboring under the delusion that they are at all concerned about either our happiness or our comfort?"

"Then why did they bring it?" demanded Skruf.

"To fatten us," explained von Horst. "It seems that they like their meat fat, or perhaps I should say that it tastes less nauseating to them fat and fresh."

"Fatten us? Eat us?" gasped Skruf.

Frag made no comment, but von Horst could see that he was redoubling his efforts to free himself of his bonds. A moment later La-ja succeeded in negotiating the last knot, and von Horst felt the thongs slip from his wrists. He sat up and gathered a handful of fruit, passing it to La-ja; then he turned to Frug.

"My hands are free," he said. "I am going to remove your bonds, and then you can liberate Skruf. You are not going to kill me. If you try to, I'll kill you. I still have the weapon with which Skruf has seen me kill many beasts and you have seen some of your own warriors killed. I am going to set you free for two reasons. One is, that you may eat. The other is not a very good reason unless you have more brains than I give you credit for. I hope for the best, but I am skeptical."

"My brains are all right," growled Frug. "What is your other reason for setting us free?"

"We are all in the same fix here," von Horst reminded him. "If we don't escape, we shall be killed and eaten. Working together, we may be able to escape. If we waste our time trying to kill one another or trying to keep from being killed, none of us will escape. Now what do you and Skruf intend to do about it? It is up to you. I shall free your hands in any event; and I shall kill you before you can lay your hands on me, if you try to."

Frug scratched his head. "I swore to kill you," he said. "You got me into this trouble. If you hadn't escaped from Basti, I wouldn't be here. It was while we were tracking you that we were captured. You killed some of my warriors. You liberated all of our slaves, and now you ask me not to kill you."

Von Horst shrugged. "You are misstating the facts," he said. "I am not asking you not to kill me; I am asking you not to make me kill you. Frug, while I have this weapon, you haven't a chance on earth to kill me. Perhaps I should have said a chance in the earth."

"Promise him, Frug," begged Skruf. "He is right. We can't escape if we fight among ourselves. At least you and I can't, for he can kill us both. I have seen him kill with the little black stick. He does not have to be near the thing he wishes to kill."

"Very well," Frug finally assented. "We will not try to kill one another until after we have escaped from these people."

Von Horst moved over to the chief of Basti and removed the bonds from his wrists; then Frug released Skruf. All but the latter immediately fell to eating. Skruf sat apart, his

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

face resolutely turned away from the food.

"Why don't you eat?" demanded Frug.

"And get fat?" cried Skruf. "The rest of you can get fat and be eaten, but I shall remain so thin that no one will eat me."

Time passed, as it must even in a timeless world. They ate and slept, but von Horst and La-ja never slept at the same time—Frug and Skruf had indicated too great an interest in the pistol. When von Horst slept, La-ja watched. Durg came occasionally to talk with them. He always appeared friendly, but he could hold out no hope that they might eventually escape the fate that Torp had decreed for them.

Von Horst had often wondered where the nuts and fruits came from with which they were fed, as he had seen no sign of either in the grim forest he and La-ja had traversed. He had a theory that perhaps the end of the forest was not far distant, and this he wished to determine. He had by no means given up hope of escape. When he asked Durg where the Gorbuses got the food for them, he was told that it grew at no great distance, near the edge of the Forest of Death. This was what von Horst was most anxious to hear. He also learned the direction in which they went to gather the fruit. But when he attempted to persuade Durg to assist them in their attempt to escape, he met with flat refusal; and finally he desisted, being careful to give Durg the impression that he had wholly abandoned the idea.

The rich nuts, the lack of exercise soon began to show in added layers of fat. Only Skruf remained noticeably thin, steadfastly refusing to eat more than enough to sustain life. Frug put on fat far more rapidly than either von Horst or La-ja.

Finally Skruf called his attention to it. "They will eat you first," he prophesied. "You are very fat."

"Do you think so?" asked the chief, feeling of the fold of fat that encircled his waist. He seemed perturbed. "I thought we were going to try to escape," he said to von Horst.

"I have been hoping that the Gorbuses would leave for a while," replied the European, "but only a few of them go away at a time."

"Most of them are asleep now," remarked Laja. "Many of their torches have gone out."

"That's right," said von Horst, looking out into the other chamber. "I've never seen so many of them asleep at one time."

"I think they have been feeding," said La-ja. "They have been going out in small parties constantly since I slept last. Perhaps that is why they are sleepy."

"There go some more torches," whispered von Horst. "There are only a few burning now."

"And all the rest of the Gorbuses are nodding." Laja could not hide her excitement. "If they all fall asleep, we can get away."

But they did not all sleep. One remained awake, nursing his torch. It was Torp. Finally he arose and approached the cave where the prisoners were confined. When they saw him coming they lay down in such positions as to hide the fact that their hands were free, as they had in the past whenever a Gorbus came to their cave. Torp entered, carry-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing his torch. He looked them over carefully. Finally he poked Skruf with a foot. "There is no use waiting for you to get fat," he grumbled. "We will kill you after this sleep; then we won't have to feed you any more."

"Kill the other first," begged Skruf; "They are much fatter than I. Give me a chance, and I will get fat."

Torp yawned. "Well kill you all at the same time," he said; then he turned to leave the cave.

Von Horst looked beyond him and saw that every torch in the outer room was extinguished—the place lay in utter darkness. Then he leaped silently to his feet, drawing his pistol as he did so. Raising the pistol, von Horst struck Torp a single heavy blow on the skull. Without a sound, the fellow dropped in his tracks. Von Horst seized his torch.

"Come!" he whispered.

Silently the four ran across the larger cavern to one of the exits and up the steeply inclined shaft to the corridor that led to the outer world. As they passed from the dim precincts of the cavern even the grim and gloomy wood looked fair and lovely by comparison.

How long they had been imprisoned von Horst could not even guess, but he felt that it must have been a long time. They had lost count of sleeps, there had been so many; and they had all, with the exception of Skruf, put on considerable weight, indicating that their imprisonment had been of long duration. At a trot they set off in the direction they believed led to the nearest edge of the Forest of Death, for they were determined to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the caves of the Gorbuses before their escape was discovered.

When in good condition, Pellucidarians can maintain a steady trot for great distances; but it was not long before all except Skruf were panting from the exertion—additional proof that they had been long confined. At length they were forced to slacken their gait to a walk.

"When do we commence killing one another, Frug?" inquired von Horst. "The truce was to last only until we had escaped—and we have escaped."

Frug eyed the pistol in its holster and pulled on his beard, meditatively. "Let us wait until we have left the forest and separated," he suggested; "then, if we ever meet again, I shall kill you."

"For your sake let us hope that we never meet again," laughed von Horst, "but what assurance have I that in the meantime you and Skruf will honor the agreement? I certainly have no reason to trust Skruf."

"No one trusts Skruf," replied Frug; "but you have my word that I will not kill either one of you until after we separate, and I promise Skruf that I will kill him if he does."

With this loose understanding von Horst had to be satisfied; but he felt some confidence in Frug's word, because the very nature of the man seemed to preclude any possibility of duplicity on his part. He was brutal and savage, but he was also forthright and candid. If he intended killing you, he climbed to a house top and screamed it to the world. He was not the sort to sneak up on a man from behind and stab him in the back—that was more like Skruf.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

And so they hurried on until, at last, much sooner than they had expected, the forest thinned, the type of trees changed, and they came into what seemed a new world. Once again the noonday sun beat down upon lush vegetation growing between the boles of an open forest. Flowers bloomed, birds sang. Presently they saw an open plain upon which they stood at the outer rim of the forest land.

No sign of pursuit had developed, and the Pellucidarians were certain that the Gorbuses would never venture out into the sunlight beyond their gloomy wood.

"They won't follow us here," said Frug. "No man has ever seen a Gorbus outside the Forest of Death."

"Then let's find a place to sleep," suggested von Horst. "We need rest. Afterward we can go on until we are ready to separate."

"Which way do you go?" demanded Frug.

Von Horst looked questioningly at La-ja. "Which way?" he asked.

The girl pointed out across the plain.

"That is the way I go, too," said von Horst.

"We turn this way," said Frug, pointing to the left. "We shall skirt the forest until we can pass around it. I will never enter the Forest of Death again."

"Then after we have slept we separate," said von Horst.

"Yes," replied Frug. "I hope that we shall meet again soon, that I may kill you."

"When you get an idea into that thick skull of yours, you certainly stick to it," commented von Horst with a grin.

"We will look for a place to sleep," announced the Bastian. "There may be caves in this cliff."

They discovered a place where they could descend the escarpment, and on a natural ledge they found an out-jutting stratum beneath which erosion had worn a large niche in which a dozen men might have found shelter from the hot rays of the sun.

"You sleep first, La-ja," said von Horst, "and I will watch."

"I am not sleepy," she replied. "You sleep. I have slept since you."

It was a bare rock that von Horst stretched out upon, such a bed as some far distant forebear might have found good but it was a far cry from box springs and hair mattresses. Yet so quickly had the man sloughed the last veneer of civilization and reverted to some primordial type, he seemed quite content with the naked rock; and in a moment he was asleep.

When he awoke he felt that he must have slept for a long time, so thoroughly rested and refreshed was he. He stretched luxuriously before turning over to greet La-ja and see if the others were awake. When he did turn, he found himself alone. Frug and Skruf were gone and La-ja, too.

He stepped to the edge of the shelf before the cave and looked out across the plain and to the left and to the right. There was no one in sight. He thought at first that La-ja had run away from him, and then it occurred to him that Frug and Skruf had stolen her. Anger and resentment swelled in his bosom at the duplicity of the Bastian chief in whose word he had trusted, and then of a sudden a new thought came to him. After all, had Frug

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

broken his pledge? He had only promised not to kill; he had not promised not to abduct!

FROM THE FOOT of the cliff where the cave lay, the plain stretched away knee deep in lush grasses; and from his position above, von Horst saw where a new trail had been recently trampled toward the left. That was the direction which Frug had said he and Skruf would take to avoid the Forest of Death on their return to Basti. The grass was not trampled out across the plain in the direction of Lo-har; there was just the one plain trail toward the left—a trail that would be easy to follow as long as it ran through the deep grass.

Von Horst wished that he knew how long he had slept, so that he might have some idea of the start the abductors had; for he was certain that they were abductors. It was inconceivable that La-ja would have accompanied them back to Basti voluntarily. The trail appeared quite plain from above, but when he reached the foot of the cliff he saw that it was not so apparent. A close examination showed that only the grasses that had been actually crushed and broken by the passage of the three remained down to mark the trail; all others had returned to their normal positions. It was this discovery that gave von Horst greatest concern, as it seemed to indicate that the two men and the girl were far ahead of him.

At the foot of the cliff there were some indications of a struggle. The grasses here had been crushed and broken over a considerable area. The man could visualize what had taken place. La-ja had tried to break away from her captors and had probably put up a good fight, but finally she had been overcome and carried away.

He stood looking along that dim trail that led away into a new unknown. It led away from Sari, to what unknown dangers he could not even guess. Should he follow it? And for what? There was little likelihood that he could overtake the three; and if they reached Basti, none that he could rescue the girl. Why should he wish to risk his life in an attempt to save her—an attempt that was almost certain to fail? She disliked him. She had not taken even decent precautions to hide the fact. And if he did rescue her it would be only to be killed by her savage fellow tribesmen for his pains. He thought of Gaz, the terrible man who crushed lives out with his bare hands.

Were he to turn in the opposite direction he might skirt that end of the forest and pick up Dangar's trail. The thought of Dangar and the pleasurable anticipation of the friendly welcome awaiting him in Sari filled him with longing. He desired companionship; he longed to feel the warmth of a friend's hand again, to see the light of a friendly smile. He was tired of indifference, and enmity, and hatred. With a sigh, he turned back and followed the dim trail toward the left. Off there somewhere in the distance was a little figure with a wealth of golden hair, perhaps an ignis fatuus luring him to his doom.

"I wonder why I do it," he said half aloud; and then he shrugged his shoulders and swung on into the unknown.

Profiting by past experience and the schooling he had received from Dangar, he kept in mind constantly the necessity of directing his steps so that he would never be too far from some haven of safety were he threatened by any of the savage creatures that haunt the Pellucidarian scene. Trees were the prime factor in his defensive strategy. Never before had trees loomed so large in his consciousness, and all too often did he have to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seek sanctuary among their branches. Now it would be a huge cave lion that drove him to shelter; again a mighty tarag, or some fearsome reptile of a forgotten age.

Along the route that he followed he found the places that Frug and Skruf and La-ja had slept; and here he slept, too. For food he had the eggs of birds and reptiles, fruits that grew upon some of the trees or bushes along his route, and various edible tubers that Dangar or La-ja had taught him to find and recognize. He made fire as had his primitive progenitors who trod the outer crust with the bos and the cave bear, and he took the time to fashion a new bow and arrows that he might have meat without wasting his precious ammunition. A sturdy spear he fashioned, too, its tip fire hardened as were the tips of his arrows.

He tried to make up for the time thus lost by pushing on throughout the endless day until utter exhaustion forced him to halt for sleep. Often, between his own sleeps, he passed one and sometimes two of the sleeping places of those he pursued; and this assurance that he was gaining on them heartened him and spurred him on, yet there were times when his quest seemed utterly hopeless and discouragement sat heavily upon him. The great forest seemed to run on interminably, but at last it ended at the foot of a transverse range of rough hills. Here he had difficulty in following the trail, for the ground was no longer carpeted with tall grass but was oftentimes hard and stony.

Beyond the hills stretched another rolling plain through which wound a large river. He viewed it first from the summit of the pass that he had followed through the hills along an ancient trail worn deep by the feet of men and beasts through countless ages. There was a fringe of forest along the river and little patches of wood scattered about the plain which stretched away to his right to merge in the distance with what seemed the blue of an ocean. Ahead of him, far away, another forest bounded the plain upon that side, while to his left the hills curved around to meet the forest in the distance. Game dotted the landscape as far as the eye could reach. In the nearer foreground he could distinguish bos and red deer, antelopes, tapirs, sheep, and several species of herbivorous dinosaurs; while at the edge of the forest skirting the river he made out the huge forms of mammoths and giant sloths. It was a scene of such primitive beauty and interest that von Horst stood spellbound for several minutes, fascinated by its loveliness. For the moment he forgot everything but the scene below him; but presently his empty belly recalled him to the realities of life; so that it was no aesthete that crept silently down toward the plain, but a primitive hunter of the stone age. He followed the stream when he reached the foot of the hills, taking advantage of the cover offered by the trees that bordered it. He thought that he might get a sheep, several of which were grazing close to the fringing trees; but he knew how wary they were and how difficult to stalk.

The river wound in great loops, and to save time he took short cuts across the low hillocks which the river skirted in its wide bends like a great serpent gliding smoothly toward the sea. While he was below the summits of the hillocks he could not see the sheep, nor they him; yet he moved always cautiously since he never knew what dangers might confront him upon the hillocks' opposite slopes, for the country was game filled; and where the herbivores are, there also are the flesh eaters.

As he topped one little hill he saw that which brought him to a sudden halt—a great, hairy mammoth lying upon its side moaning. It lay upon a small level flat beside the river

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

at which was evidently a watering place or a ford, and not its moaning alone proclaimed that it was suffering but the agonized trembling of its huge bulk as well. Notwithstanding the fact that von Horst knew that these mighty beasts might be highly dangerous, there was ordinarily such a sweet placidity in their appearance and such a suggestion of dependability and intelligence in their great bulk and dignified mien that he was wont to be lulled into a feeling of security in their presence; and there had been aroused within him a considerable fondness and respect for these shaggy progenitors of the modern elephant.

To see one suffering thus filled him with compassion; and though his better judgment warned him against it, he could not resist the urge to approach more closely and investigate; though what he might accomplish was doubtless scarcely more than a nebulous conjecture in his mind. As he came closer the small eyes of the pachyderm discovered him; and it raised its head and trumpeted angrily, but it made no effort to rise. Thus assured that it was helpless, von Horst came close and examined it; and as he did so he discovered numerous sharp pointed splinters of bamboo protruding an inch or so above the surface of the mud in which the beast lay at the river's edge; so that he had to move with great care to avoid stepping on them.

Almost immediately he saw the cause of the beast's helplessness and suffering—several of these splinters were imbedded in the sole of each great pad; so that the creature could not stand without suffering extreme agony. It was evident that the sharp stakes had been planted by men; and the purpose of them was quite apparent; for how more easily could men of the old stone age, with their primitive weapons, bring down the giant mammoth and render it helpless that they might dispatch it in safety?

The presence of the stakes suggested the proximity of men, and von Horst had already had sufficient evidence to convince him that all men in this savage world were enemies; yet, though he looked carefully in all directions, he saw no sign that any were about; then he turned his attention once more to the beast and its predicament. If he could remove the splinters and permit the mammoth to arise what might he expect from the pain racked creature? Von Horst ran his fingers through his hair dubiously; then the beast moaned again and so piteously that the man, casting discretion to the winds, decided to do what he could to assuage its suffering.

As he started to pick his way among the splinters closer to those huge pads, he realized that the beast would only be impaled upon others the moment it arose after he had removed those that it had already collected; so he set to work to pick the sharpened stakes from the ground over the entire area that they covered, a strip about twenty feet wide across the trail leading to the river; and as he worked, the eyes of the mammoth were on him constantly, watching his every move.

As he worked near the great beast's head he noticed a patch of white hair the width of a man's hand growing down the side of the animal's cheek. He had seen many mammoths, but he had never seen one similarly marked. It gave the beast a strange, patriarchal expression, as though he wore an enormous white burnside. Von Horst noted the strange marking casually as he went about his work, but his principal interest was centered on speculation as to what the gigantic beast would do when it was able to rise. Some of the stakes were planted within reach of the mighty trunk; but the man gathered

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

these, as he did the others, apparently unconcerned by the risk he took. And always the little eyes watched his every move, but whether in sullen hate or wary curiosity he could not guess.

At length came the time when all the stakes that he could locate had been removed, and the next were those embedded in the great pads. Without a moment's hesitation von Horst walked to the hind feet of the pachyderm and, one by one, drew out the torturing slivers. Then he moved to the front feet, well within reach of the sinuous trunk and the great, curving tusks. Methodically, he commenced to remove the slivers from the fore pads, the powerful trunk weaving above him like a huge serpent. He felt it touch him, the moist tip of it gliding over his naked body. It encircled him, but he paid no attention to it. He had invited death by a humane gesture, and he was game. The trunk wrapped about his torso—gently, almost caressingly. It did not tighten; it did not interfere with his work; yet he sensed it might close instantly at the slightest false move on his part. Death seemed very close.

When he had removed the last sliver he stood slowly erect. For a moment he waited; then, very gently, he laid hold of the trunk and sought to push it from him. There was no resistance. He moved unhurriedly, with great deliberation; yet he was under high nervous strain. At last he stood free and moved slowly away. He did not stop, but continued on along the river in the direction he had been going when he discovered the mammoth. For a moment he was obsessed by a powerful urge to run—to put as much distance between himself and the beast as he could before it regained its feet; but he did not. Instead, he moved on slowly, nonchalantly, casting an occasional glance behind him.

The beast lay quiet for a moment; then slowly it commenced to raise its bulk from the ground. Tentatively, it tried bearing its weight on its front feet; and it stood thus for a moment; then it rose and stood with all four feet on the ground. It took a few steps. Evidently its feet did not pain it greatly. It raised its trunk and trumpeted; then it moved off on the trail of the man.

At first von Horst argued to himself that it was not following him and that presently it would turn aside and go about its own affairs, but it did not—it came steadily after him at a speed considerably in excess of that at which von Horst was walking. The man shrugged resignedly. What a sentimental fool he had been! He might have known that this savage beast could not feel gratitude. He should have left it alone or put it out of its misery with a single well placed bullet. Now it was too late. Presently it would overtake him and toss him. Such were his thoughts as he walked slowly along the trail. Overtake him it did. The sinuous trunk wrapped suddenly about him and he was lifted from the ground. "This," thought von Horst, "is the end."

The mammoth stopped and passed him back to its right side where it placed him on the ground; but it still let its trunk rest lightly about him, holding him facing its side; and what von Horst saw there awoke within him a realization of the sagacity of the animal, for this side, upon which it had lain, was thickly studded with bamboo slivers such as he had plucked from his feet. It wished the man to remove them as he had removed those others.

Von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he set about his work, and when it was completed he once again moved on along the trail he had been following. From the tail of an

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eye he saw the mammoth swing about in its tracks and depart in the opposite direction. In a few moments it was lost to sight. The man felt that he was well out of a nasty situation that what he described to himself as maudlin sentimentality had gotten him into. But now that it was well over and he had seen the last of the great beast he was glad that he had gone to its aid.

His hunger, momentarily forgotten, manifested itself once more as he started to stalk the sheep again. From the summit of a rise he saw them, and again he was the primitive huntsman of the Pleistocene. Only a cartridge belt and a forty-five differentiated him in appearance from his progenitors of the stone age. From the next rise of ground that he mounted he saw the sheep again, much closer now; but he saw something else, far to the right across the river. At first glance he thought it only a herd of mammoths moving down a gently sloping plain from the foothills, coming toward the river; but instantly he recognized the truth—astride the neck of each of the great beasts rode a man.

The sight recalled to his memory Thorek, the mammothman of Ja-ru. These, indeed, must be mammoth-men; perhaps the country to which he had wandered was Ja-ru. However, the fact that he had been on friendly terms with Thorek induced no illusions as to the reception he might expect from the savage tribesmen of his erstwhile companion in slavery. Discretion counselled him to keep out of sight; and so he moved cautiously down the hill toward a clump of trees that grew beside the river, where, concealed from their view, he could still watch the approach of the company.

As he reached the trees he saw the embers of a camp fire still glowing; and his heart leaped in his bosom, for he knew that he was now close on the trail of La-ja and her abductors. Which way had they gone from here? They could not be far, for no matter how much the timelessness of Pellucidar might deceive the mind of man it could not befuddle the laws of combustion—fire would consume wood as quickly and embers would remain hot as long here as upon the outer crust and no longer.

He hastily examined the ground about the camp site. For the moment the mammoth-men were forgotten in contemplation of the nearness of La-ja and the surge of rage against Frug and Skruf, now almost within reach of his vengeance. He loosened the gun in its holster. He would give no quarter, but would shoot them down as he would a couple of mad dogs; nor was there a question of doubt as to the Tightness of his contemplated act, so easily does man slough the thin veneer of inhibitions with which civilization conceals but does not eradicate primal instincts and characteristics of mankind. There were no laws here for him other than those he made himself.

His search revealed the footsteps of those he sought in the soft earth at the river's edge. He recognized them all—the imprints of the great, splay feet of the men, those of La-ja, small and perfect. They led to the river and did not return. By that he knew that they had crossed. He looked in that direction and saw the mammoth-men steadily approaching. They were much nearer now, the long, swinging strides of the mammoths covering ground rapidly.

Trees and bushes grew upon the far bank of the river, grew in isolated clumps as though planted by the hand of some master landscape gardener. Between two such clusers of bushes he could still see the mammoth-men, but he could see to no great distance either to the right or left. He wished to cross the river in pursuit of those he sought, but he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

did not wish to attract the attention of the mammothmen to him. Cautiously he moved down stream until a clump of bushes on the opposite bank hid him from the view of the approaching warriors; then, careless of the possible presence of dangerous reptiles, he plunged into the stream, which was neither wide nor swift. A few powerful strokes carried him to the opposite bank, where he again sought the trail of the trio. Nor did he have far to search, for he found it almost immediately leading out toward the plain where the mammoth-men rode.

To follow immediately would be to reveal his presence to the approaching warriors, who could not fail to see him should he expose himself now, as they were not over a quarter of a mile away. They had changed their course slightly and were moving up stream more nearly parallel with the course of the river. Presently they would pass him, and he would be free to continue his search for La-ja. As he waited, he stood partially concealed behind a bush, only a little of his face showing. Thus he watched the mammoth-men. They were moving steadily upon their course, like soldiers of any age upon the march, the monotony of which lulls even exuberant spirits into quiescence. But suddenly there was a change. A rider looking toward the river suddenly halted his mount and shouted to his fellows, pointing back down stream at something evidently some distance below the point where von Horst was hiding. Simultaneously he started in the direction he had pointed, urging his lumbering mount into a swifter gait; and after him trooped the remainder of the company.

Savage, primitive to the degree was the sight of that warlike company to von Horst—extinct men upon extinct mounts; animated monuments of savage might. The European was thrilled; and, too, his curiosity was aroused. What had the warrior seen? What were they approaching or pursuing? Risking discovery, von Horst, moved stealthily around the end of the bush that had concealed him, until he could look down the valley in the direction the mammoth-men were riding.

At first he saw nothing. A tiny hillock, scarcely more than a mound, shut off his view. Assured that the attention of the riders was riveted upon whatever quarry lay ahead of them and that they would not notice him, von Horst crept forward to the mound and up its side until he could see beyond its summit. What he saw brought his heart into his mouth.

VON HORST sprang from his concealment and ran out into the open; and as he did so he reached for his gun, but his holster was empty. There was no time to go back and search for the weapon. He recalled loosening it in its holster before he plunged into the river, and now he assumed that it had fallen out at that time. It was a tragic loss; but there was nothing that he could do about it, and that which he saw before him tended to crowd all other considerations into the background. Running toward the river from out upon the plain and pursued now by the mammoth-men were three figures which he instantly recognized as La-ja and her abductors.

The trees that dotted both sides of the river grew closer together just ahead and formed a little forest toward which the three were running. Skruf had seized La-ja by a hand and was dragging her along, while Frug brought up the rear. Although La-ja was running it was evident that she was attempting to break loose from Skruf, and Frug was striking at her with a heavy switch in an effort to goad her to greater speed. It seemed certain that they would reach the forest ahead of the mammoth-men if nothing delayed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

them, though by a small margin. Perhaps then they might escape, yet La-ja was trying to delay them. Her only reason, as far as von Horst could imagine, was that she would prefer to be the captive of the mammoth-men than to remain a prisoner of the Bastians.

Uppermost in von Horst's mind was the desire to reach the great brute that was striking the girl. Never before in his life had the instinct to kill an enemy so overwhelmingly mastered him. He even forgot the menace of the advancing mammoth-men in the heat of his hate and blood lust.

He came diagonally upon the three from the side and a little to the rear, but so engrossed were they with one another and their flight that they did not see him until he was almost upon them and had shouted a curt command to Frug to stop striking the girl. A new fear was added to the terror already reflected in Skruf's eyes, a new hope leaped to Laja's, a glad cry to her lips as she voiced the one word, "Von!" What a wealth of relief and hope were expressed in that single monosyllable! Surprise and rage were in Frug's snarled recognition as he vouchsafed his reply and registered his contempt for the man by striking again at La-ja. And then, just at the edge of the wood, von Horst leaped for him, leaped for his throat; and the two went down, rolling on the flower starred turf in what each hoped was a duel to the death.

Both men were powerful; but Frug outweighed his antagonist by thirty pounds, an advantage that, however, was offset by von Horst's agility and skill. All that was in the mind of either was to kill the other— everything else was forgotten. Each fought for a hold upon the other's throat, each struck terrific blows at the other's face. The caveman grunted and cursed; von Horst fought in silence. And thus the mammoth-men came upon them, surrounding them. A dozen leaped from their huge mounts and fell upon the two. These, too, were mighty men. They dragged the combatants apart and made them prisoners.

It was then that von Horst had an opportunity to look around for La-ja. She was nowhere in sight; neither was Skruf. The chief of the mammoth-men was looking for them, too; and when he saw that they were missing he sent a party of his men across the river in search of them. The remainder mounted the mammoths after having two of the great beasts swing von Horst and Frug to their heads in front of their riders; then, without waiting for the party that had gone in search of La-ja and Skruf, they set off again in the direction they had been going at the time the discovery of the three had interrupted their march.

The mammoth-men appeared very sure of themselves, so much so that they did not even bind their prisoners' hands; which was the equivalent of saying that escape was impossible; nor did von Horst doubt but that such was the case. The leader and some of the others questioned him. They asked him his name, from what country he came, where he was going. They were gruff, unfriendly men; and it was easy to see that they hated all strangers. So accustomed was von Horst to this characteristic of Pellucidarians that he made no effort to assure them that he was friendly, reasoning, and rightly, that it would have been a waste of energy and breath.

As they moved on up the river they presently discovered a huge mammoth ahead of them. It was in the open, so that they could not stalk it; but evidently they particularly wished it.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"It is he," said one. "I would know him as far as I could see him."

"The trap did not get him," commented the leader. "He is too wise to be fooled by traps."

"What good would he be if we did catch him?" demanded another. "He is an ugly customer. Already he has killed ten men that we know of who hunted him. He could never be trained now, he is too old."

"Mamth wishes him," said the leader. "That is enough; Mamth is chief. He will use him in the little canyon. He will give us great sport."

The great beast had been moving off across the plain when they first saw him; now he turned and faced them—a huge creature, larger than any of those the mammoth-men rode.

"It's he all right," said the warrior upon whose mount von Horst rode; "it's Ah Am, Ma Rahna."

It was then that von Horst first noticed the great patch of white hair on the animal's left jowl. "Ah Am, Ma Rahna; Old White, The Killer," he mused. The killer! He realized now how foolhardy he had been in approaching the beast at all. The fact that he had not been killed suggested that the huge creature was not only endowed with great intelligence but with a well developed sense of gratitude. Only thus could he account for his being still alive.

The leader of the band issued some instructions, and the party spread out and started to circle Old White, which remained facing them, making no effort to escape.

"Trog's going to try to drive him," remarked the warrior with von Horst. "If he can bring in Ah Am he will be a great man."

"Can he?" asked von Horst.

The warrior shrugged. "The sun-bleached bones of ten warriors are a better answer than any living tongue can offer."

Slowly the warriors drew around behind Ah Ara in a half circle; then they closed and moved forward. In the meantime the quarry had turned again to face them. His little eyes gleamed, his trunk weaved slowly to and fro as he rocked his head from side to side. The warriors commenced to shout and wave their spears. They came closer. It seemed incredible that the animal did not turn and break for freedom; but it did not—Ah Ara stood his ground.

Suddenly he raised his trunk and, with a loud scream, charged. Straight for the center of the line he came—a solid line, for the mammoths were touching side to side. He lowered his head; and when he struck, two mammoths were knocked down. As he passed over them he seized one of the riders and hurled him fifty feet; then, as he passed over him, he trampled him. After that he appeared to pay no more attention to the party, but moved on majestically in the direction he had been going before the interruption. It seemed to von Horst that his whole manner screamed contempt for the man-things that had dared to delay him.

Trog shook his head ruefully and turned toward the river. The two felled mammoths came to their feet—one of them was riderless, but he followed on with the others. No one paid any attention to the mangled warrior lying on the plain. Perhaps he was dead, but

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

he may not have been. It was evident to von Horst that these men held human life lightly and that they were without compassion. He wondered if Thorek would recall that he had suggested that they be friends should they meet again, for it was possible that he might meet him now that he was a prisoner of Thorek's fellows. Prompted by this recollection of the man who had escaped from the Bastians with him he turned toward the warrior riding behind him.

"Do you know Thorek?" he asked.

"Yes; what do you know of him?"

"We are friends."

The warrior laughed. "No stranger is friend to a mammothman," he said.

"Did Thorek return from Basti?" asked von Horst.

"No," and then suddenly, "What is your name?"

"Von. If Thorek were here he would tell you that we are friends."

"Well, perhaps Thorek was your friend; but no other mammothman will be. Friendship for a stranger is weakness in a warrior. Strangers are to be killed; that is why they are strangers. If there were no strangers there would be no one to kill except one another, and that would not be good for the tribe. We would soon kill each other off. Men must fight and kill; it is the life blood of warriors."

Presently they came to the river and crossed it, keeping slightly above the regular ford; then Trog and some of the others dismounted and examined the ground in the trail leading in to the river. Von Horst watched them with amusement, for he recognized the spot well. He saw that the men were surprised and angry at what they discovered.

"Ah Ara has been down here," exclaimed Trog. "There is blood here; but where are the stakes? They have all been removed."

"I saw mud and blood on the right side of Ah Ara as he passed close to me when he charged through our line," volunteered a warrior.

"Yes; he was down here," growled Trog. "We had him, but how could he have escaped?"

"He is very old and very wise," said one.

"He could never be old enough or wise enough to pick the splinters from his pads and his side, to pick them all out of the ground," remonstrated Trog. "That could only be done by a man."

"Here are the footprints of a man," exclaimed a warrior.

"But who would dare approach Ah Ara and take the splinters from him? Had a man done that we should find his body close by." Trog shook his head. "I do not understand."

They found the splinters where von Horst had tossed them aside, and they set them out again with great care and well concealed upon the opposite side of the river; then they mounted and rode back toward the hills from which they had been coming when von Horst first sighted them.

"Well get him yet," remarked von Horst's warrior.

"How?" asked the European.

"When he gets splinters in his feet the pain is so great that he cannot stand; the pads

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of a tandor are thick, but they are very sensitive. When we come back and find him down we put heavy thongs of mammoth hide about his neck. These are fastened to three mammoths on each side of him, mammoths trained for this work; then we take the splinters from the ground around him and from his pads and let him get up. After that it is easy. The six mammoths drag him until he tires of being choked. After that he will follow quietly."

"Will you ever be able to train Ah Ara, provided you get him?" asked von Horst.

The warrior shook his head. "He would never be safe. Mamth will put him in the little canyon, and he will afford us much amusement."

"In what way?"

The warrior looked at von Horst and grinned. "I think you will find out soon enough," he said.

After the party reached the foothills it followed a well worn trail that led up to a wide plateau upon which several mighty canyons debouched from the mountains beyond. The plateau was covered with lush grasses and was crossed by several streams that issued from the mouths of the canyons, into one of which Trog led his savage troop. The grandeur of the scenery within the canyon was impressive, and to such an extent that for the moment von Horst almost forgot the hopelessness of his situation. Within its narrow mouth the canyon widened into a lovely valley walled by precipitous cliffs that were broken occasionally by the narrow mouths of smaller canyons. A stream flowed through the bed of the canyon, trees and flowering shrubs grew in profusion, fish leaped in the river, and birds of weird, prehistoric shapes and coloration flew from tree to tree.

Von Horst sighed. "What a lovely place," he thought, "if only La-ja and I were here alone."

La-ja! What had become of her? Had she escaped from Skruf, or was she still his captive? She would have been better off here among the mammoth-men, or at least no worse off; for no one could have been more repugnant to her than Skruf. At least, were she here, she would have had one friend whom she might trust even though he were unable to do anything for her.

Von Horst sighed. He had a premonition that he would never again see La-ja, and it suddenly occurred to him that this strange world was going to be a very much more terrible place to live in because of that. He realized that something had gone out of his life that nothing could replace. Perhaps it hurt his pride to admit it even to himself, for the girl had certainly given him sufficient proof on numerous occasions that he meant nothing whatever to her; yet he could not forget the pathetic longing note in her voice when she had recognized him and called to him just before the mammoth-men had separated them forever.

Depressed by this sad reverie, his future fate seemed to mean nothing to him. He did not care what the mammoth-men did to him. The sooner it was over, the better. Without a single companion for whom he cared, he might as well be dead as alive; for there was no chance that he might ever return to the outer world, nor little more that he would find Sari should he escape from his present predicament.

While he was occupied by these unhappy thoughts the troop turned into one of the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

smaller canyons, and shortly thereafter he saw the caves of the mammoth-men pitting the face of the lofty cliff ahead. A considerable number of men, women, and children were on the ground at the foot of the cliff where a grove of trees offered shelter from the noonday sun. Some of the women busied themselves around cooking fires; others were fashioning sandals or loin cloths. Men chipped laboriously at stone weapons in the making, scraped spear shafts into shape, or merely loafed at ease. At sight of the returning troop, they quit whatever had been occupying them and clustered about to inspect the prisoners and exchange gossip with the arriving warriors.

Trog looked very important. "Where is Mamth?" he demanded.

"He is in his cave, sleeping," said a woman.

"Go and awaken him," commanded Trog.

"Go yourself," replied the woman; "I do not wish to be killed."

Trog, who, with the other warriors of his party, had dismounted, was standing near the woman; and at her refusal he swung his spear quickly and felled her with the haft, knocking her unconscious; then he turned to another woman. "Go and awaken Mamth," he said.

The woman laughed in his face. "Guva has no man," she said, "but I have. You will not knock me down with your spear. You would not have knocked Guva down if she had had one. Go and awaken Mamth yourself."

"I am not afraid of your man," blustered Trog.

"Then why don't you knock me down," taunted the woman, "for I am not going to awaken Mamth."

The crowd gathered about commenced to laugh at Trog, adding to his discomfiture and his rage. He stood there, red in the face, swinging his spear to and fro and looking from one to another of them.

"What are you looking for?" demanded the woman, "—widows and orphans?"

"You will pay for this," growled Trog; then his eyes alighted on von Horst. "Go and awaken Mamth," he commanded.

The European grinned. "Where is he?" he asked.

Trog pointed to a cave entrance part way up the cliff. "He is in there," he growled. "Get along with you!" He swung his spear, striking at von Horst. The prisoner dodged, and seizing the weapon wrenched it from Trog's grasp; then he broke it across his knee and flung it on the ground at the mammothman's feet.

"I am neither a woman nor a child," he said; and, turning, started toward the cliff and Mamth's cave, in his ears the shouts and laughter of the tribesmen.

"I kill!" shouted Trog, and started after him, drawing his stone knife.

Von Horst wheeled and waited the mad charge of the mammothman. Trog approached him at a run, brandishing his knife above his shoulder. When he struck, von Horst seized his wrist, turned quickly, stooped low and, drawing the man's arm across his shoulder, hurled him over his head and heavily to the ground; then he continued on his way to the foot of the cliff and up the rude ladders that led to Mamth's cave. Glancing back over his shoulder he saw Trog still lying where he had fallen, apparently insensible, while the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

crowd laughed uproariously, evidencing to von Horst that his act had not prejudiced them against him and, also, that Trog did not appear to be overly popular.

He wondered just how popular he himself would be with Mamth when he awakened him, for he had gathered from what he had just heard that Mamth did not relish being awakened from his sleep; and he had seen just how primitive these people were and how little control they had of their tempers— like primitive people everywhere, even those who were supposed to be civilized and yet had primitive minds. When at last he came to the mouth of the cave he looked in, but he could see nothing, because of the darkness of the interior. He shouted Mamth's name in a loud voice and waited. There was no response. The laughter below had ceased. The watchers were waiting in tense expectancy the result of his temerity.

Von Horst shouted again, this time more loudly; and this time there was a response—a bull-like bellow and the sound of movement within. Then a perfect mountain of a man emerged from the cave, his hair dishevelled, his beard awry, his eyes sleep bleared and bloodshot. When he saw von Horst he stopped in amazement.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why did you awaken Mamth? Do you wish to be killed?"

"I am a prisoner," replied von Horst. "Trog sent me to awaken you because he was afraid to do it himself; and as for being killed, that is probably what I was taken prisoner for."

"Trog sent you, did he?" demanded Mamth. "Where is he?"

Von Horst pointed toward the foot of the cliff where Trog still lay. Mamth looked down.

"What is the matter with him?"

"He tried to kill me with a dagger," explained the prisoner.

"And you killed him?"

"I don't think so. He is probably merely stunned."

"What did he wish of me?"

"He wished to show you the two prisoners he brought in. I am one of them."

"He disturbed my sleep for that!" grumbled Mamth. "Now I cannot get to sleep again." He pointed to the ladder. "Go down."

Von Horst did as he was bid, and Mamth followed him. When they reached the ground Trog was regaining consciousness. Mamth went and stood over him.

"So-ho!" he exclaimed. "So you were afraid to come and awaken Mamth, but you sent a prisoner who might have sneaked into the cave and killed Mamth in his sleep. You are a fool. And you let the prisoner knock the wits from your head. You are a fine one to be sub-chief. What happened?"

"He must have hit me over the head with a big rock when I wasn't looking," said Trog.

"He did not," cried a woman. "Trog was going to hit the prisoner with his spear. The prisoner took Trog's spear from him and broke it in two. There it lies. Then Trog tried to kill the prisoner with his knife. The prisoner picked Trog up and threw him over his head."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

A number of them commenced to laugh as the woman recalled the events, but they did not laugh so loudly in the presence of Mamth.

The chief looked searchingly at von Horst. "So you broke Trog's spear and then threw him over your head!" he exclaimed. "Where is the other prisoner?"

"Here," said one of the warriors guarding Frug.

Mamth looked at the Bastian. "He is even bigger than the other," he said. "They should furnish us good sport in the little canyon. Take them away. Gorph, take this one to your cave and see that he does not escape." He jerked a thumb toward von Horst. "Truth, you take charge of the other. Have them ready when Mamth wishes them. Trog, you are no longer a sub-chief. Mamth will appoint a better man."

GORPH WAS A short, stocky, middle-aged man with a wealth of whiskers and small, close-set eyes. Von Horst judged him a mean customer even before the fellow gave any indication of his true nature, which he was not long in doing; for as soon as Mamth indicated that he was to take over the prisoner he stepped up to von Horst, seized him roughly by the shoulder and gave him a push toward the foot of the cliff and the nearest ladder.

"Get along!" he growled, "and be quick about it." Then, without other reason than pure brutality, he prodded his prisoner in the back with the point of his spear—a vicious jab that brought blood. Resentment and rage flared in the breast of the man from the outer crust, the sudden pain goading him to instant action. He wheeled and crouched. Gorph, sensing attack, jabbed at him again with his spear; but von Horst pushed the weapon aside and leaped close, pinioning the mammothman's head beneath his right arm; then he commenced to spin, faster and faster. Gorph's feet left the ground, his body whirled, almost horizontal, in a flattening circle; von Horst released his hold and sent the fellow spinning to the ground.

Mamth broke into a loud guffaw, which was echoed by the other spectators. Gorph staggered dizzily to his feet; but before he was fully erect von Horst clamped the same hold upon him, and once again whirled and threw him. When Gorph arose this time, dizzy and befuddled, the other was standing over him. His fists were clenched, one arm was back ready to deliver a blow to the bewhiskered chin that would have put the mammothman out for good; but then his rage left him as suddenly as it had come.

"The next time you try anything like that on me, Gorph, I'll kill you," he said. "Pick up your spear and go along. I'll follow."

He had given no thought as to what the reaction of the other mammoth-men might be to his attack upon one of their fellows; nor had he cared; but their laughter assured him that they had enjoyed the discomfiture of Gorph, as they would probably enjoy the discomfiture of any creature. Gorph stood for a moment, hesitant. He heard the laughter and the taunts of his fellows. He was trembling with rage; but he looked at the man who had bested him, standing there waiting to best him again; and his courage proved unequal to his anger.

He stepped over to retrieve his spear, and as he passed von Horst he spoke in a low tone of voice. "I'll kill you yet," he said.

The European shrugged and followed him. Gorph walked to a ladder and started to ascend. "See that nothing happens to him, Gorph," shouted Mamth. "Hell be a good one

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

for the little canyon.”

“You see,” remarked von Horst, “that between Mamth and me it’ll be best for your health that you treat me well.”

Gorph mumbled in his beard as he climbed to the third tier of caves, von Horst following him upward. Here the mammothman followed the wide ledge to the right and stopped before a large entrance in which squatted three women. One was middle-aged, the other two much younger. Of these, she who appeared to be the elder was short and squat like Gorph, an unprepossessing girl with a sinister countenance. Their only clothing was scanty loincloths.

“Who is that?” demanded the woman.

“Another mouth to feed,” grumbled Gorph; “one of the prisoners that Trog brought in. We keep him and guard him, but if he falls off the cliff it will not be my fault.”

The elder of the two girls grinned. “He might,” she said.

The man walked to the younger girl and kicked her. “Get me food,” he growled, “and be quick about it.”

The girl winced and scurried into the cave. Gorph squatted beside the other two women. The elder was fashioning a pair of sandals with soles of mammoth-hide; the other just sat staring vacantly at nothing.

Gorph eyed her, scowling. “How much longer shall I have to hunt for you, Gram?” demanded Gorph. “Why don’t you get a man? Won’t any of them have you?”

“Shut up,” growled Grum. “If they won’t have me it’s because I look like you—because I am like you. If you’d been a woman you’d never have had a mate. I hate you.”

Gorph leaned over and struck her in the face. “Get out of here!” he cried; “go get yourself a man.”

“Leave her alone,” said the older woman wearily.

“Keep out of this,” warned Gorph, “or I’ll kick your ribs in.”

The woman sighed.

“That is all that Mumal does,” sneered Grum. “She just sits and sighs—she and that monkey-faced Lotai. Sometimes I could kill them both.”

“You are a bad daughter,” said Mumal. “The time that I bore you was a bad time indeed.”

“Get out!” growled Gorph. “I told you to get out.” He pointed a stubby finger at Grum.

“Try to put me out,” snapped the girl. “I’d scratch out your eyes. Get me a man. If you were any good you’d get men for both your daughters. You’re a coward. You’re afraid to fight men for us.”

“If I ever made a man marry you he’d sneak up behind me in the woods the first chance he got and kill me.”

“I’d help him,” said Grum.

“Lotai!” bellowed Gorph. “Where is the food?”

“Coming!” called the girl from the interior of the cave, and a moment later she came

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

with a handful of dried meat. She tossed it on the ground in front of Gorph and backed away to the far corner of the entrance, where she sat in huddled misery.

Gorph attacked the meat like a ravenous wolf, breaking off great hunks between his powerful

teeth and swallowing them whole.

"Water!" he snapped, when he had finished.

The girl called Lotai arose and hurried back into the cave. A moment later she returned with a gourd which she handed to Gorph.

"That is all," she said; "there is no more water."

Gorph gulped it down and arose. "I am going to sleep now," he said. "I'll kill anyone who awakens me. Mumal, you and Grum go for water. Lotai, watch the prisoner. If he tries to escape, scream; and I'll come out and—"

"And what?" inquired von Horst.

"Do as I told you," said Gorph to the women, ignoring von Horst's query; then he lumbered into the cave.

The two older women followed him, returning shortly each with a large gourd; then they descended the ladders on their way for water. Von Horst looked at the young girl who had been left to guard him. Now that the others had gone the strained expression that had clouded her face had disappeared, and she was more beautiful than before.

"Happy family," he remarked.

She looked at him questioningly. "Do you think so?" she asked. "Perhaps the others are happy, though they do not seem so. I know that I am not."

Once again von Horst was faced with the literal-mindedness of the stone age. He was reminded of Laja.

"I was only laughing with words," he explained.

"Oh," she said, "I see. You do not really think that we are happy?"

"Is it always like this?" he demanded.

"Sometimes it is worse; but when Mumal and I are alone, we are happy. Grum hates me because I am pretty and she is not; Gorph hates everyone. I think he even hates himself."

"It is strange that you have no mate," said von Horst; "you are very good-looking."

"No man will take me because he would have to take Grum, too, if Gorph insisted—that is a law of the mammoth-men. You see, she is older than I; and should have a man first."

"What did Grum mean when she said that Gorph was afraid to fight men for you?"

"If we picked out men that we wanted they would have to take us if Gorph fought them and won; but I would not wish a man that way. I would wish my man to want me so much that he would fight to get me."

"And that is the only way that Grum could get a mate?" asked von Horst.

"Yes, because she has no brother to fight for her, nor any friend to do it for her."

"You mean that any man who would fight for her could get her a mate?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Why, yes; but who would do it?"

"A friend might," he said; "or any man who wanted you badly enough."

She shook her head. "It is not so easy as that. If a man who was not her father or brother fought for her and lost, he would have to take her. And Grum has made it even worse by choosing Horg as the man she wishes to mate with. No one could defeat Horg. He is the biggest and strongest man in the tribe."

"Rather a precarious method of getting a mate," mused von Horst. "If your man is vanquished, you get him; but you may get a corpse."

"No," she explained. "They fight with bare hands until one of them gives up. Sometimes they are badly hurt, but seldom is any one killed."

They sat in silence for a while, the girl watching the man intently. Von Horst was thinking of La-ja and wondering what fate had befallen her. He was sad in the knowledge that she had passed out of his life forever—the haughty, imperious little slave girl who hated him. He wondered if she really did hate him. There were times when he doubted that she did. He shook his head. Who could ever understand a woman?

Lotai stirred. "What is your name?" she asked.

"Von," he replied.

"I think you are a very nice man," she said.

"Thank you. I think you are a very nice girl."

"You are not like any man I have ever seen before. I think you are a man that I would trust. You would never beat me. You would always be kind, and you would talk to me as men talk to men. That is something our men never do. At first, maybe, they are nice; but soon they only speak to give orders or to scold."

"Oh, some of them are not so bad as others," she added. "I think that Gorph, my father, is the worst. He is very bad. He never says a pleasant word to any of us, and he is worse with me than with the others. He beats me and kicks me. I think that he hates me. But that is all right, because I hate him."

"There was one very nice man. I liked him, but he went away and never came back. He must be dead. He was a big man and a great warrior; but he was kind to women and children, and he laughed and was pleasant. The women would all have liked him for a mate, but he never would take a mate to live always in his cave. Thorek was different that way."

"Thorek?" exclaimed von Horst. "He did not come back to Ja-ru?"

"You know him?" asked Lotai.

"We were prisoners of the Bastians, and we escaped together. We were friends. He should have been here before this. Since we parted I have travelled far and slept many times. Something must have happened to him."

The girl sighed. "He was such a nice man; but then, what difference does it make? He was not for me. I will get a mate like Gorph and be kicked and beaten the rest of my life."

"The women of Ja-ru have a hard time of it, I should say," remarked von Horst.

"Not all of them. Only those like Mumal and myself. Some of them are big and strong

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and like to fight. If they are kicked, they kick back. These have a happy time. Mumal and I are different. She is not of Ja-ru. Gorph stole her from another tribe. I am like her, and Grum is like Gorph. We would run away and go back to my mother's country; but it is very far, and the dangers are great. We would be killed long before we got to Sari."

"Sari," mused von Horst. "That is the country that Dangar came from. That is where I should like to go when I escape from here."

"You will never escape," said Lotai. "You will go into the little canyon, and you will never come out."

"What is this little canyon I have heard so much about?" demanded the man.

"You will find out soon enough. Here come Mumal and Grum with the water. We must not talk together too much in front of Grum and Gorph. If they thought that I was friendly with a prisoner they would kick me and beat me all the more."

The two women came into view up the ladder from below, each balancing a heavy gourd of water on her head. Mumal looked tired and dejected. Grum was hot and irritable, her evil face twisted in a black frown. She paused in the entrance to the cave.

"I am going to sleep," she said. "See that you don't make any noise;" then she entered the cave.

Mumal stooped and stroked Lotai's hair as she passed. "I too am going to sleep, little one," she said.

"I should like to sleep myself," remarked Lotai after the others had entered the cave.

"Why don't you?" asked von Horst.

"I have to watch you."

"I'll promise not to go away while you are guarding me," he assured her. "Go in and sleep. I'd like to myself."

She looked at him intently for a long time before she spoke. "I believe that you would not try to escape if you told me you would not," she said, "but if Gorph found you out here while I was asleep in the cave it would be just as bad for me as though you had escaped. If you will go in though and not come out while I am sleeping it will be safe. We can go into a far corner of the cave and sleep, and then they won't bother us."

Von Horst was very tired, and he must have slept a long time. When he awoke, Lotai was not there. He found her with the others on the ledge before the cave. They were eating jerked venison, washing it down with great draughts of water. Gorph and Grum ate noisily, like beasts.

No one offered von Horst food. It lay in a little pile on a piece of skin in which it had been wrapped, filthy looking and malodorous; but it was food, and von Horst was famished. He walked over to it where it lay close to Gorph, and stooped to take some. As he did so Gorph struck his hand away.

"This fine food is not for slaves," he growled. "Go to the back of the cave and get the scraps and the bones that are there."

From the vile odor that he had noticed in the cave, von Horst could surmise the nature of the food that was intended for him, food that only actual starvation could drive him to eat. He knew that his future life with these people, however short or however long

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

it might be, would depend largely upon the attitude that he took at this time. He reached again for the food; and again Gorph struck at his hand, but this time von Horst seized the fellow's wrist, jerked him to his feet, and struck him a heavy blow on the jaw. Gorph dropped in his tracks. Von Horst gathered up a handful of the venison, picked up a gourd of water and crossed to the opposite side of the entrance where Mumal and Lotai sat wide eyed and trembling. There he sat down and commenced to eat.

Grum had not spoken, and now she sat with her eyes upon von Horst; but what was passing in the dark convolutions of that savage brain none might guess. Was she filled with rage that a stranger had struck down her father? Was she selfishly resentful that he had taken food? Or was she secretly admiring his courage, strength, and skill?

Presently consciousness returned to Gorph. He opened his eyes and raised himself on one elbow. He looked puzzled, and was evidently trying to gather the threads of what had transpired. He stared at von Horst and the venison he was eating.

Presently he rubbed his jaw, feeling of it gingerly as though to discover if it were broken; then he fell to eating. During all that had transpired no one had spoken; but von Horst was satisfied—he knew that he would not again be denied food and needed no verbal assurance of the fact.

The endless Pellucidarian day dragged on. Von Horst ate and slept. Gorph hunted, sometimes returning with the carcass of a kill or cuts from those he had hunted with companions, sometimes empty handed. Von Horst saw parties of mammoth-men come and go on their huge mounts. He talked with Lotai and with Mumal. Occasionally Grum joined in the conversations, but more often she sat in silence staring at von Horst.

The man wondered what his fate was to be and when he would know. The timelessness of Pellucidar offered no standard for the measurement of duration. It was this fact, he judged, that made the Pellucidarians seem so often to be dilatory. "Immediately" here might encompass the passage of an hour or a day of the outer crust's solar time or, conceivably, a much longer period. Perhaps Mamth thought that he was handling the fate of the two prisoners with dispatch, but to von Horst it seemed an eternity. He had never seen Frug since they had been separated at the foot of the cliff, and if he never saw him again it would be far too soon.

On one occasion von Horst was sitting on the ledge before the entrance to the cave thinking of La-ja, as he often did, and wondering if she still lived. He was alone, for Gorph was hunting, Mumal and Lotai had gone up the canyon for a potato-like tuber, and Grum was asleep in the cave. He was enjoying the solitude, free from the scolding and cruelty of the family when either Grum or Gorph were present. He was daydreaming, recalling pleasant memories, conjuring the faces and figures of friends of bygone days— friends that he would never see again; but the thought did not make him particularly sad. It was good to recall the happier events of the past. His reveries were interrupted by the shuffling of sandaled feet within the cave. Grum was awake. Presently she came out on the ledge. She stood looking at him intently for a moment.

"You would make me a good mate," she said. "I want you."

Von Horst laughed. "What makes you think I would make a good mate?" he asked.

"I saw the way you handled Gorph," she replied. "I was told what you did to Trog. I

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

want you for my mate.”

“But I am a stranger and a prisoner. I think I’ve heard one of you say that your women couldn’t mate with the men of other tribes.”

“I will see Mamth about that. Perhaps he would consent. You would make a good warrior for Mamth.”

Von Horst stretched comfortably and grinned. He felt quite safe. “Mamth would never give his consent,” he said.

“Then we will run away,” announced Grum. “I am tired of living here. I hate them all.”

“You’ve got it all figured out, haven’t you?”

“I have. It is all settled,” replied Gram.

“But suppose I don’t want you for a mate?” he inquired.

“It will be better than death,” she reminded him. “If you stay here you will go to your death in the little canyon.”

“We could not escape. If escape had been possible, I would have been gone long since. I have constantly watched for my chance.”

“We can escape,” said Gram. “I know a way that you do not know of.”

“How about Horg?” he asked. “I thought you wanted Horg.”

“I do, but I can’t get him.”

“If I helped you to get Horg, would you help me to escape?” he asked, as an idea suddenly developed in his mind.

“How could you get Horg for me?”

“I have an idea that I could. If we could go to Mamth together, and you asked him to let me be your mate, he would refuse; then I could explain the plan I have that would get Horg for you. I think he would like it.”

“Will you do it?” she demanded.

“Will you help me escape?”

“Yes,” she promised.

As they talked, von Horst saw a party of mammoth-men returning to the village on their huge mounts. They came with shouts and laughter, like conquering warriors; and there was one among them riding double behind another warrior, who was surrounded by a great crowd of jabbering, gesticulating natives as soon as he dismounted. The man from the outer crust watched them with but little interest and only casual curiosity. He could not know the cause of their exultation.

Shortly after the return of the warriors, von Horst noticed considerable activity in the grove at the foot of the cliff. Cooking fires were being built on the ground, which was unusual, as most of the cooking was done by individual families on the ledges before their caves.

“There is going to be a karoo,” said Grum. “We shall all go down and have much to eat and drink.”

“What is a karoo?” he asked. It was a word he had not heard before.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Grum explained that it was a feast and celebration in honor of some noteworthy event, in which all of the members of the tribe joined. She did not know the reason for this karoo, but judged that it was to celebrate something important that the returning party had accomplished.

"We can't go down until Gorph returns or Mamth sends for us," she said, "because my orders are to remain here and watch you; but when Gorph comes he will take you down, as otherwise one of us would have to remain here with you and miss the celebration. You are a nuisance. I wish you were dead."

"Then you wouldn't get Horg," he reminded her.

"I won't get him anyway. There is nothing that you can do to get him for me. Ill have to take you instead, but you're not the man that Horg is. Wait until you see him. Compared with you he is as the tandor is to the thag; and, besides, he has a mighty beard. His face is not as yours, smooth like a woman's. Always you are scraping off your beard with the strange, shiny knife that you carry."

Presently Lotai and Mumal returned to the cave, to be followed shortly by Gorph. The man carried the carcass of an antelope he had killed; the women, a supply of tubers; and after they had deposited these things in the cave Gorph ordered them all to descend to the ground. Here there was a considerable gathering, several hundred men, women, and children, comprising von Horst concluded, the entire membership of the tribe. There was much talking and laughing—a holiday spirit seemed to possess the gathering, making a strange contrast to their usual demeanor. The strange warrior was still surrounded by such a large crowd that von Horst did not catch a glimpse of him at first. Little attention was paid to the prisoners as Frug squatted disconsolately with his back to the bole of a tree, while von Horst stood watching with interest the largest concourse of really primitive people that he had ever seen.

Presently Mamth discovered him. "Come here!" he shouted; then, he turned to the warrior who seemed the center of attraction. "Here's a prisoner such as no man ever saw before. Take a look at him. He has a face as smooth as a woman's and yellow hair. He tossed Trog and Gorph around as though they were babies. Come here you!" he again commanded von Horst.

As the prisoner approached, the warrior pushed his way through the crowd to see him; and a moment later they stood face to face.

"Thorek!" exclaimed von Horst.

"Well! Well!" roared the mammothman. "It is Von or I'm a jalok. So this is the man who tossed Trog and Gorph around? I am not surprised. I can toss either of them, and he tossed me."

"You know him?" demanded Mamth.

"Know him? We are friends. Together we escaped from Basti, taking the slaves with us."

"Friends!" exclaimed Mamth. "He is a stranger. Mammothmen do not make friends of strangers."

"I did, and he made a good friend," retorted Thorek. "Because of that he should have the friendship of all mammothmen. He is a great warrior, and should be allowed to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

live with us and take a mate from among our women; or he should be permitted to go his way unmolested."

The heavy visage of Mamth was furrowed by a black scowl. "No!" he shouted. "He is a stranger and an enemy, and he dies as should all the enemies of the mammothmen. Mamth has been saving him for the little canyon. When Mamth is ready, he goes there. Mamth has spoken."

THE SENTENCE of death had been pronounced; but von Horst was not shocked, because he was not surprised. He had known all along that death in some form would end his captivity if he did not escape. When it would come, in this timeless world, could not be even a matter of conjecture. Thorek was angry; but he could do nothing to save his friend, because Mamth was chief and his word law. He sulked and grumbled beneath his breath, but when the feast started he fell to with the rest and soon apparently forgot his grievance in enjoyment of food and drink. Von Horst and Frug were permitted to join in the celebration; and after a taste of the brew that was being served, von Horst concluded that it would not require much of it to cause a man to forget more than a grievance. It was fermented by the women—a mixture of wild maize, several herbs, and honey—and while far from unpalatable it had the kick of an army mule. One taste sufficed for von Horst. Both men and women partook of it freely with varying results. Some became more loquacious and hilarious, others morose and quarrelsome; so that there was usually a fight progressing in some part of the grove. There were some who did not drink at all, and von Horst noticed that Lotai and Mumal were among these. Grum, on the contrary, was evidently a two-fisted drinker; and while she carried it well, it accentuated her distinctive characteristics, so that she became more bellicose, domineering, and assertive.

Von Horst watched her not without some amusement, as she approached an enormous man and threw her arms about his neck, revealing a characteristic that it had taken several potent droughts to coax to the surface. Grum evidencing affection bordered upon the ludicrous. Evidently the large man felt the same way about it, for he roughly disengaged her arms from about his neck and gave her a violent push that sent her sprawling on the ground. She was up in an instant, a veritable fury, her face distorted with rage. Von Horst thought that she was going to attack the ungallant one, but instead she barged down on Mamth.

"I want a mate," she screamed. "I want Horg."

Mamth turned toward the big man. "What does Horg say?" he demanded.

So that was Horg. Von Horst appraised the fellow and was glad that he had not elected to fight him for the sake of the delectable Grum. The man was a giant. He must have weighed close to three hundred pounds, and he bulged with muscles.

Horg guffawed loudly. "Take that she-tarag as a mate!" he bellowed. "I'd as soon take a Mahar."

"You heard him," said Mamth. "Go back to the karoo and leave the man alone. He is not for you."

"He is for me," screamed Grum. "I have a warrior who will fight Horg for me."

Every eye sought Gorph, and a great laugh followed.

"Come on, Gorph," a warrior shouted; "show us how you will best Horg, but don't

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

kill him.”

Horg laughed uproariously. “Come on, Gorph,” he cried. “If you beat me I’ll take Grum off your hands, and I don’t blame you for wanting to be rid of her.”

“She’s drunk too much tumal,” growled Gorph. “I never promised to fight Horg for her. Horg is my friend; I do not wish to harm him.”

This elicited another roar of laughter, and Horg thought that it was so funny that he rolled on the ground bellowing his amusement. Grum said nothing. She just watched Horg and Gorph in silence for a moment; then she turned to Mamth.

“I didn’t say that Gorph was going to fight Horg for me. Gorph is a coward. He would fight nothing if he could get out of it. I have a man who will fight

Horg— and do it now.”

“Who is he?” demanded Mamth.

Von Horst experienced a distinct sinking feeling around the pit of his stomach. He knew what was coming.

Grum pointed a stubby, grimy finger at him. “There he is,” she cried in a loud voice.

“He’s not a mammothman,” objected Mamth. “How can he fight for you?”

“Because no one else will,” admitted Grum.

Mamth shook his head, but he did not have time to voice a definite refusal before Horg spoke up.

“Let him fight me,” he said. “This is a karoo, and we should have some amusement.”

“You will promise not to kill him?” demanded Maranth. “I am saving him for the little canyon.”

“I will not kill him,” promised Horg.

Von Horst approached the two. “And when I have beaten you,” he demanded, “you will make Grum your mate?”

“That is the way of the mammothmen,” said Mamth. “He will have to take her, but you will not beat him.”

“Beat me!” bellowed Horg. “Let me get hold of him.”

“How do we fight?” asked von Horst. “Are there any rules?”

“You fight as the beasts fight,” explained Mamth. “You may use no weapon, no stone nor stick. You fight until one of you is unable to fight longer or gives up.”

“I am ready,” said von Horst.

“Are you ready, Horg?” demanded Mamth.

Horg laughed nonchalantly and contemptuously. “I am ready,” he said.

“Then fight!” commanded Mamth.

The spectators formed a circle about the combatants as the two approached one another. Horg was in fine spirits. The tumal he had drunk accounted partially for that, and certainty of an easy victory took care of the rest. He cracked jokes with his friends at the expense of both von Horst and Grum. They were rather broad jokes and not at all of the parlor variety, but every one enjoyed them immensely—that is, everyone but Grum. She was furious.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Wait until I get you," she screamed. "You'll wish you'd never been born."

Von Horst grinned as he featured the life that was in store for Horg should the mammothman lose. Death would be sweeter.

Suddenly Horg made a rush at von Horst, the brawny arms, the ham-like hands endeavoring to close upon him; but von Horst stooped and dodged beneath them; then he wheeled and struck Horg on the jaw—a blow that staggered him. Before the mammothman could recover, he was struck again; and again his head rocked. Now he was furious. He cracked no more jokes. He bellowed like an angry elephant and charged again. Again von Horst dodged him, and the great hulk went lumbering on a dozen paces before it could stop.

When Horg turned he saw von Horst charging him. This was what he wished. Now he could get hold of the fellow, and once he got hold of him he could crush him, break his bones if he wished unless he gave up.

He stood waiting, his feet spread far apart, his arms open. Von Horst ran swiftly straight toward Horg. Just before he reached him he leaped into the air, flexed his knees, drawing his feet close to his body, and then with all his strength backed by the momentum of his charge he kicked Horg with both feet full in the face. The result was astonishing—especially to Horg. He turned a complete back somersault, landed on his head, and dropped face down in the dirt.

Groggy and only half conscious, he staggered slowly to his feet. Von Horst was waiting for him. "Have you had enough?" he asked. He did not wish to punish the man further in the condition he was in. The crowd was yelling encouragement to him; and with the fickleness and cruelty of crowds was jeering at its fallen champion. Grum, seeing her hopes about to be realized, screamed at the top of her voice as she urged von Horst to finish the almost helpless man; but Horg would not give in. Perhaps he heard Grum and preferred death. He lunged for his lighter antagonist, growling beast-like.

"I kill!" he screamed.

Thus was von Horst compelled to continue, for he knew that Horg had uttered no idle threat. If the fellow could get those great paws on him, get one good hold, he would kill him. In both his hands he seized one of the outstretched wrists, swung quickly around, bent suddenly forward, and hurled the mighty man over his head—a trick of jujitsu far simpler than it appeared to the amazed onlookers. Horg fell heavily and lay still. Von Horst approached and stood over him. There were cries of "Kill him! Kill him!" for the blood-lust of these primitive savages was aroused, stimulated perhaps by the tumal they had drunk.

Von Horst turned to Mamth. "Have I won?" he asked.

The chief nodded. "You have won," he said.

The victor looked at Grum. "Here is your mate," he said. "Come and take him."

The woman ran forward and fell upon the prostrate Horg, beating and kicking him. Von Horst turned away in disgust. The others, laughing, returned to the food and the tumal.

Thorek came and slapped von Horst on the back. "I told them you were a great warrior," he exulted.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"You should know," said von Horst with a grin.

"Come and join the karoo," said Thorek. "You have had nothing to eat or drink. That is not the way to make karoo."

"Why should I make karoo?" demanded von Horst. "I do not even know what is being celebrated."

"They have captured Old White, The Killer. That is something to celebrate. There never was such a wise old mammoth, nor one as large. After the next sleep we shall start training him, and when he is trained Mamth will ride him. He is a fit mammoth for a chief."

"I should like to see him trained," remarked von Horst; for he thought it might be an interesting occasion if Old White objected, which he was sure that he would.

"I'll ask Mamth if you can come," said Thorek. "It will probably be after the next sleep. Every one will wish to sleep after the karoo."

The two men talked for awhile, exchanging experiences that had befallen them since they had separated; then Thorek wandered away to drink with his fellows, and von Horst sought out Lotai. Together they watched the celebration, which was by this time loud and boisterous. Fights were more numerous, the laughter deafening. Usually dignified old warriors were performing foolish antics and laughing uproariously at themselves. Many of the women were thick tongued and bleary eyed. As von Horst watched them he was struck by the very obvious fact that human nature had undergone little or no change from the stone age to the present time. Except for the difference in language and apparel these might be people from any present-day country of the outer crust. Presently he saw Grum approaching unsteadily. For the moment she had relaxed surveillance over her new mate. Von Horst attracted her attention and beckoned to her.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"You have not forgotten our bargain?" inquired the man.

"What bargain?" she asked.

"If I got Horg for you, you were to help me escape."

"When they are asleep after the karoo I will show you the way, but you cannot go now. The tarags would get you. After the prisoners are taken to the little canyon, the tarags will be gone; then you could go."

"It will be too late then," he said, "for I am to go to the little canyon; and if I have surmised correctly from what I have heard, I shall not return."

"No," she admitted with a shrug, "you will not. But I promised to show you how you might escape. It is the only way I know; if you can't use it, that is not my fault." Then she staggered away in search of Horg, and von Horst returned to Lotai.

The celebration dragged on—interminably, it seemed to von Horst; but at last those who could still walk reeled to their caves to sleep.

Horg had drunk himself into a stupor, and Grum was beating him over the head with a stick in an effort either to punish or arouse him—perhaps to kill him. Von Horst could not guess which.

Lotai, Mumal, and Gorph were climbing to their caves—the last so befuddled that climbing the ladder toward his ledge seemed to von Horst almost to verge upon suicide.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The European passed close to Gram. "They are all going to their caves to sleep," he whispered. "Now is your chance to tell me."

"Go to the ledge before Gorph's cave, and wait there for me."

As he climbed the ladders toward the ledge he could hear Grum berating Horg as she beat him, and he smiled as he speculated on the similarity between the people of the old stone age and those of modern-day civilization. The principal difference seemed to lie in the matter of inhibitions. He had known women of the outer crust who were like Grum—their thoughts were taloned.

He sat down upon the ledge to wait. He was quite alone. The others had gone into the cave to sleep. He thought of Lotai and the sad lives that she and Mumal led. He thought too of La-ja, and these thoughts were sad thoughts. It seemed strange that this little savage should have won to such a place in his life that a future without her loomed dull and grey. Could it be that he loved her? He sought to analyze his feelings that he might refute such a theory, but he only arrived at another sigh with the realization that no matter what logic he brought to bear the fact remained that her passing from his life had left an emptiness that hurt.

Presently Grum came. Her little eyes were bloodshot, her frowzy hair at its frowziest. She was the personification of a stench, both morally and physically.

"Well," she said, "I guess Horg knows that he has a mate."

"Why did you beat him?" asked von Horst.

"You've got to start right with them," she explained. "If you give them the least little toehold you're lost, just as Mumal is."

He nodded in understanding of her philosophy; for, again, he had known women of the outer crust who were like her. Perhaps their technic was more refined, but their aim was identical. Marriage to them, meant a struggle for supremacy. It was a 5050 proposition of their own devising—they took fifty and demanded the other fifty.

"Now," he said, "tell me how I may escape."

"There is a hole in the rear of Gorph's cave," explained Grum. "It drops down a few feet into a tunnel. When I was a little girl Gorph was beating me. I broke away and hid in this hole. I knew he would not dare to follow me, because he had always told us that this tunnel led to the Molop Az. Gorph chased me and tried to get hold of me, reaching into the hole to seize me; so I had to move back into the tunnel to escape him. He threatened to kill me when I came out—if I didn't fall into the Molop Az and get burned up.

"I was very much afraid of Gorph then when I was a little girl. When this happened he had been drinking too much tumal, and I knew that if I came out he really would kill me; so I determined to stay where I was until I thought he was asleep.

"Then I got to thinking about Molop Az. Perhaps I could go far enough in the tunnel to see it and return safely. After all it didn't make much difference to me if I did fall into it. Gorph was very cruel, and sooner or later he was sure to kill me. Of that I was convinced; so I thought I might as well take a chance with the Molop Az. Being young, I was very curious. The more I thought about it the more I wished to investigate it. I decided to follow the tunnel and see the Molop Az."

"What is the Molop Az?" asked von Horst.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"It is a sea of fire, Pellucidar floats upon it. We know that, because there are places in Pellucidar where the smoke and fire come up through the ground from the Molop Az. There are holes in mountains where melted rock flows up.

"The dead that are buried in the ground are taken down bit by bit by little demons and burned up in Molop Az. There is no doubt about that because when we dig up a body that has been buried we find that some of it has been carried away—perhaps all of it."

"And did you find the Molop Az?"

She shook her head "No. The tunnel does not lead to Molop Az; it leads to the little canyon. From there, except at certain times, you could easily make your escape from Jaru; just go up the canyon and climb the cliff at the upper end. Beyond, you can drop down into another canyon that leads out of our country into a country where mammothmen seldom if ever go."

"Thanks," said von Horst.

"But you can't go now. The tarags would get you. They are in the far end of the tunnel. They will be there until the prisoners are taken to the little canyon."

"What is the little canyon?" he asked.

She looked at him in surprise. "What would a little canyon be but a little canyon?" she demanded.

"What happens there?"

"You will find out soon enough. Now I am going back to Horg. You got him for me, and I have kept my promise. I don't know whether he was worth the trouble, but at least I shall have a cave of my own." She turned then and left him.

"At least I shall have a cave of my own!" von Horst grinned. Evidently it was an immemorial custom that girls should wed to escape their families.

BELOW HIM the leaves of the trees moved to a gentle breeze as von Horst came from the cave after sleeping. The air was fresh and clear, and the breeze was cool, tempering the heat of the high sun, as though it blew across the snow of far mountains. The man looked about him and saw that life was astir again in the cliff village of the mammothmen. He heard his name called from below and saw Thorek beckoning to him to come down. Gorph had to yet come from the cave; so von Horst descended and joined Thorek at the foot of the cliff. Many warriors were assembling. Mamth was there, and though he saw von Horst he paid no attention to him.

"We are going to train Old White," said Thorek.

"Mamth has said that you may come with us. You may ride with me upon my mammoth."

Presently the herd appeared, driven by herders mounted on their great beasts. These were all well trained mammoths, and they moved quietly and obediently. When all the warriors were mounted Mamth led the way up the main canyon. The gorges that ran into it were mostly narrow with steep, rocky sides.

Before the entrance to one of them Mamth halted. The opening into the gorge was very narrow and across it were bars each of which was a good size tree. The top bar was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

roped securely into place by a large rope that had been made by braiding long grass. Warriors removed the rope; and two of the mammoths, directed by their riders, lifted the bars and removed them; then the party filed into the gorge. Beyond the entrance it widened and the floor was level. They had ridden up it but a short distance when von Horst saw a huge mammoth standing in the shade of a tree. It was swaying to and fro on its great feet, its head and trunk undulating to the cadence of its swaying body. On its left jowl was a patch of white hair. It was Old White, the Killer. Von Horst would have recognized the huge beast among hundreds of its kind.

At sight of the party the animal raised its trunk and screamed. The rocky hills trembled to the giant's warning. It started toward them, and then von Horst saw that one of its feet was secured to a great log. It could move about, but the log prevented it from moving rapidly. Two mammoths were ridden in on either side of Old White. When he attempted to raise his trunk to seize the riders the other mammoths caught and held it with theirs, and it required the combined strength of the two to do it.

Now a third warrior rode close and clambered over the back of one of the tame mammoths to sit astride Old White's neck, and the close contact of the man threw the captive into a fury. Trumpeting and bellowing, he sought to escape from the beasts that pressed close on either side. He fought to raise his trunk and snatch the man-thing from him as he lurched erratically about the floor of the gorge dragging the great log in his wake.

Old White, the Killer, was wise with great age; and when he realized that he could accomplish nothing by force he suddenly became quiet and apparently as docile as a lamb; then commenced his training. The rider struck him a sharp blow with the flat of his hand on his back just behind where the warrior sat, and simultaneously a mammoth in his rear and those on either side of him pushed him forward. A blow on the head in front of the rider was a signal to stop, and the three great training mammoths stopped him. Time and again he was rehearsed in these movements; then he was taught to turn to the right or left by a kick on the opposite jowl. Old White learned quickly. Mamth was delighted. Here, indeed, was a powerful and intelligent beast worthy to be the mount of a chief. The trainers watched Old White carefully, his ears, his tail, his trunk, his eyes, for these were the indices of his temper; and they all proclaimed resignation and docility.

"Never have I seen a wild mammoth subdued so easily or taught so quickly," exclaimed Mamth. "He is already trained. Let him be ridden alone now without the other mammoths. Later we will remove the log."

The riders withdrew the other three mammoths to a short distance from Old White; and the great beast stood gently swinging his trunk to and fro, a picture of contentment and docility. The young warrior riding him struck him sharply on the back, signaling him to move forward. As quickly as a snake strikes, Old White swung his trunk up and seized his rider; and simultaneously he was transformed into a raging devil of hate and fury.

Screaming with rage, he raised the struggling warrior high above his head; then he dashed him heavily to the ground in front of him. The three warriors who had been assisting with his training urged their mounts in, but too late. Old White placed a great foot on the warrior and trampled him into the earth. Then he seized the warrior on the nearest mount and hurled him across the gorge, and all the while he trumpeted and bellowed.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

As he lunged for another of the warriors the two turned their mammoths and retreated; but Old White pursued them, dragging the heavy log after him. That was the end of the mighty captive's training. Mamth, disappointed and angry, ordered all from the gorge, the bars of the gate were replaced; and they rode back down the canyon toward the village.

Von Horst had been an interested spectator, his interest augmented because of his former remarkable experience with Old White. His sympathies were with the mammoth, and he was secretly pleased by the manner in which the wise old beast had completely deceived his captors and won at least a partial revenge for the sufferings and indignities that he had been subjected to.

Von Horst had also been interested in learning the method used by the mammothmen in controlling their ponderous mounts; and as they left the gorge he asked Thorek if he might pilot the animal the two were riding; and Thorek, amused, consented. Thus he acquired an accomplishment that appeared quite as useless as anything that he had ever learned in his life.

"Will you ever be able to tame Old White?" he asked.

Thorek shook his head. "Not unless Mamth is crazy," he replied, "will he ever risk another warrior on that brute. He is a natural killer. Such as he are never tamed. He has killed many warriors, and knowing how easy it is to kill us he would never be safe."

"What will become of him?"

"He will be destroyed, but not before he has afforded the tribe some entertainment."

They rode on in silence. Von Horst's thoughts were rummaging in the attic of memory rediscovering many a half forgotten souvenir. Bold and fresh and clear among them was the figure of La-ja. He turned his face a little toward Thorek.

"Lotai is a fine girl," he said.

Thorek looked surprised, and scowled. "What do you know of Lotai?" he demanded.

"I am quartered in Groph's cave."

Thorek grunted.

"Lotai will make some warrior a good mate," ventured von Horst.

"He will have to fight me," said Thorek.

Von Horst smiled. "Grum has a mate," he said. "Whoever takes Lotai will not have to take Grum, too. He will only have to fight you. But I did not know that you cared. Lotai does not know that you care."

"How do you know?"

"She said so."

"Do you want her?" demanded Thorek. "She is very desirable, but she loves another."

"And you are afraid to fight him?"

"No," replied von Horst. "I am not afraid to fight him. I have already done so and beaten him."

"And you have mated with her?" Thorek's tone sounded like the growl of a beast.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"No. I know that she loves him."

"Who is he? He'll not have her. I'll kill him. Who is he? Tell me."

"You," said von Horst, grinning.

Thorek looked very foolish. "You are sure?" he asked.

"Positive. She has told me."

"Before the next sleep I shall ask Mamth, and I shall take Lotai to my cave."

"Do you have to ask Mamth?"

"Yes; he is chief."

"Ask him now," suggested von Horst.

"As well now as later," agreed Thorek. He urged his mount forward until he rode abreast of Mamth.

"I would take Lotai, the daughter of Gorph, to be my mate," he said to the chief.

Mamth scowled. "No," he said.

"Why?" demanded Thorek. "I am a great warrior. I have no mate. I want Lotai."

"So do I," said Mamth.

Thorek flushed. He was about to make some rejoinder when von Horst put a warning finger to his own lips and slowed the mammoth down until it had again taken its place in the column.

"I have a plan," said von Horst.

"What sort of a plan?" asked Thorek.

"A plan whereby you may get Lotai and at the same time do something that will make her very happy."

"And what is that?"

"She and her mother, Mumal, are very unhappy here. Mumal wishes to return to Sari, the country from which Gorph stole her; and Lotai wishes to go with her."

"Well, what can I do about it?" demanded Thorek.

"You can take them. It is the only way that you can get Lotai."

"I cannot take them," said Thorek. "I could never get them out of the village."

"Would you go to Sari with them if you could?"

"I would only be killed by the men of Sari."

"The Sarians would not kill you. Mumal is a Sarian, and I have a friend named Dangar who would see that you were taken into the tribe. He would do anything that I asked."

"It is useless," insisted Thorek. "I could never leave the village with two women."

"Would you, if you could?" demanded von Horst.

"Yes; if Lotai would go with me I would go anywhere."

"In the back of Gorph's cave there is an opening into a tunnel."

"Yes, I know of it; it leads to Molop Az."

"It leads to the little canyon. When the tarags at the other end are gone you may go out that way with Lotai and Mumal."

"How do you know that it leads to the little canyon?" demanded Thorek.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I have talked with one who went through it as far as the place where the tarags are."

Thorek rode in silence for a time before he spoke again. The party came to the village and dismounted. The herders drove the mammoths away. Mamth was irritable and glum. He turned on von Horst.

"Get to Gorph's cave," he ordered, "and stay there. Perhaps before the next sleep we shall take you to the little canyon."

"That is the end for you, my friend," said Thorek. "I am sorry. I thought that perhaps we might find a way for you to go with us to Sari; but the way will not be open, the tarags will not be gone until after you have been taken to the little canyon; then it will be too late."

Von Horst shrugged. "There is not very much that one can do about it," he said.

"There is nothing," asserted Thorek.

He walked on beside von Horst toward the ladder that led upward to Gorph's cave. "Perhaps this is the last time that we shall talk together," he said.

"Perhaps," agreed von Horst.

"Will you speak to Lotai for me?"

"Certainly. What shall I say?"

"Ask her if she will go with me to Sari, she and Mumal. If she will, raise your right arm straight toward the sun when next you see me. If she will not, raise your left arm. I shall be watching. If they will go, tell them that when the others go to the little canyon, they must hide. I will do the same, and after all are gone we can enter the tunnel and go as far as the tarags. When the tribe has left the little canyon, we can come out and go away in search of Sari."

"Good-by," said von Horst. They had reached the foot of the ladder. "Good-by and good luck. I will speak to Lotai as soon as possible."

Von Horst found Lotai and Mumal alone in front of the cave, and immediately explained the plan that he and Thorek had discussed. Both women were delighted, and they sat for a long time planning on the future. Presently Gorph came and demanded food. As usual he was surly and brutal. He glowered and growled at von Horst.

"I shall not have to feed you again," he said. "Mamth has spoken, and soon all will be in readiness in the little canyon. You will be taken there with the other prisoners, and you will not come back."

"I shall miss you, Gorph," said von Horst.

The mammothman looked at him in stupid amazement. "I shall not miss you," he said.

"I shall miss your pleasant ways and your hospitality."

"You are a fool," said Gorph. He gobbled his food and arose. "I am going into the cave to sleep," he said. "If word is passed that we are going to the little canyon, wake me."

As he crossed to enter the cave he aimed a vicious kick at Lotai, which she dodged by rolling quickly out of the way. "Why don't you get a man?" he demanded. "I am sick of seeing you around; I am tired of feeding you;" then he passed on into the cave.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The three sat in silence. They dared not plan for fear they might be overheard. The thoughts of the women were filled with happiness—thoughts of escape, of Sari, of love, and of happiness. The man thought not of the future but of the past—of the world of his birth, of his friends, and his family, of a beautiful girl who had touched his life briefly and yet had filled it. There was no future for him—only a brief interval of uncertainty and then death. A young man climbed agilely up the ladders to the ledge before Gorph's cave. He halted and surveyed the three, his eyes resting on Lotai.

"You are to go to the cave of Mamth," he said.

"He has chosen you to be his mate."

Lotai turned very white; her wide eyes were horror filled. She tried to speak; but she only gasped, her fingers clutching at her throat.

Von Horst looked at the messenger. "Tell Mamth that Lotai has been ill," he said, "but that she will come presently."

"She had better not be long," warned the man, "if she doesn't want a beating."

After he had departed the three sat whispering together for some time; then Lotai arose and went into the cave. Von Horst and Mumal remained where they were for a short time; then they too, feeling the urge to sleep, went into the cave.

Von Horst was awakened by loud voices outside the cave; then Gorph entered, calling Lotai. There was no reply. Von Horst sat up.

"Lotai is not here," he said. "Don't make so much noise; I want to sleep."

"Where is she?" demanded Gorph. "She has got to be here."

"Perhaps, but she is not. Mamth sent for her to come to his cave. Go and inquire of Mamth where she is."

Two warriors entered the cave. "She did not come to Mamth's cave," said one of them. "He sent us to fetch her."

"Perhaps something happened to her," suggested von Horst.

The two, with Gorph, searched the cave. They questioned Mumal, but she only replied as had von Horst that Mamth had sent for Lotai. At last they departed, and the others followed them to the ledge. Presently von Horst saw a number of warriors commence a search of the village. They searched every cave, but they did not find Lotai. Von Horst could see Mamth standing among the trees at the foot of the cliff, and he guessed from his gestures that he was very angry. Nor was he mistaken. Presently the chief came himself to the cave of Gorph and searched it; and he questioned Gorph, and Mumal, and von Horst. He wanted to blame one or all of them, but he had no evidence to support him. He stopped in front of von Horst, scowling.

"You are bad luck," he said, "but it will not be for long—we go now to the little canyon."

To the little canyon! The end of his adventure in Pellucidar was approaching. Well, what of it? One must die. It is little easier one time than another. Even the very old and hopeless cling tenaciously to life. They may not wish to, but they cannot help it—it is just another of Nature's immutable laws.

He followed the warriors down the ladders to the foot of the cliff. Here the clan was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

gathering, men, women, and children. A herd of mammoths was being driven into the village; and the great beasts were lifting men, women, and children to their backs. Von Horst looked about in search of Thorek, but he could not find him; then he was ordered to the back of a mammoth, where he sat behind a warrior. He saw Frug on another beast, as well as other prisoners similarly mounted. There were men from Amdar, from Gohal, from Lo-har. Von Horst had never met any of the other prisoners except Frug; but he had heard them spoken of by Mumal, Grum, and Lotai. He would have been glad to have talked with the man from Lo-har, because that was La-ja's country. Because of that he felt closer to him. His heart might have warmed even to the redoubtable Gaz.

Presently he caught sight of Thorek. He was standing at one side among the trees staring steadily at von Horst; and the instant that the man from the outer crust caught his eye, he raised his right arm aloft toward the sun.

Thorek nodded and turned away. Immediately thereafter Mamth moved off upon his great mount, and the others followed. The hairy warriors with their women and children, the monstrous beasts that bore them, presented a picture of primitive savagery that thrilled von Horst despite its sinister connotation. It was indeed an inspiring prelude to death. He looked about him. Riding beside and almost abreast of him, he discovered Gorph alone upon the back of his mammoth.

"Where is Mumal?" inquired von Horst.

Gorph looked at him and scowled. "She is sick," he said. "I hope she dies; then I could get me a good mate. I will not hunt for two of them and their brats."

Presently the trail wound up the side of the canyon to the summit of a ridge that paralleled a steep-sided canyon. Here the tribe dismounted, turning the mammoths over to the herders; after which the men, women, and children ranged themselves along the edge of the canyon which formed an amphitheater below them.

"This," said the warrior with whom von Horst had ridden, "is the little canyon."

THE EDGE of the canyon was a ledge along which the members of the tribe pressed to obtain a view of the floor of the canyon some thirty feet below. At the upper end of the canyon a massive corral had been built in which were several mammoths, and in the wall opposite the spectators a cave entrance was barred with small timbers. As von Horst stood looking down into the little canyon, Horg came carrying a rope in one end of which was a noose.

"Stick your leg through this," he said to von Horst, "and hold on tight."

Two other warriors approached and took hold of the rope with the first. "Get over the edge," directed Horg. "Your troubles will soon be over. I would almost like to change places with you."

Von Horst grinned. "No thanks," he said. "I know when I'm well off."

"When you reach the bottom, step out of the rope," instructed Horg; then the three lowered him to the floor of the canyon.

As they pulled the rope up again they tossed down a stone knife and a stone tipped spear; then they lowered another prisoner. It was Frug.

The chief of the Basti glowered at von Horst. "You've got me into a nice mess," he growled.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"You are rationalizing, my friend," replied von Horst. "You are also passing the buck, as my American friends so quaintly put it; all of which confirms an opinion I have long held—that styles in whiskers and bowler hats may change, but human nature never."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"It is quite immaterial. If I am any sort of a judge, nothing that we may or think down here at the bottom of the little canyon will ever be material to any one, not even to ourselves."

From above were dropped weapons for Frug; and then, one by one, the three remaining prisoners were lowered and armed. The five doomed men stood in a little group waiting for death, wondering, perhaps, in what form the grim reaper would present himself. They were stalwart men, all; and each in his own mind had doubtless determined to sell his life as dearly as possible.

The fact that they had been armed must have held out a faint hope that they might be given a chance, however slender, to win life and freedom in combat.

Von Horst was scrutinizing the three he had not previously seen. "Which of you is from Lo-har?" he asked.

"I am from Lo-har," said the youngest of the three. "Why do you ask?"

"I have been long with a girl from Lo-har," replied von Horst. "Together we escaped from Basti, where we were being held in slavery. We were on our way to Lo-har when two men from Basti stole her from me while I slept."

"Who was this girl?" inquired the man from Lohar.

"La-ja."

The man whistled in surprise. "The daughter of Brun, the Chief," he said. "Well, you are just as well off here as you would have been had you succeeded in reaching Lo-har with her."

"Why?" demanded von Horst. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you can only be killed here; and if you had reached Lo-har with La-ja, Gaz would have killed you. He has been on the warpath ever since La-ja disappeared. It is a good thing for the Bastians that he did not know who stole her. Gaz is a mighty man. Single handed he might destroy a whole tribe such as the Bastians."

Gaz again! Von Horst was almost sorry that he was never to have the opportunity to see this doughty warrior.

He turned to Frug. "The man from Lo-har doesn't think much of you Bastians," he taunted.

"Is he a Bastian?" demanded the Lo-harian.

"He is the chief," explained von Horst.

"I am Daj of Lo-har," cried the young warrior. "You stole the daughter of my chief, you eater of men. I kill!"

He leaped toward Frug, holding his stone-tipped spear like a bayoneted rifle. Frug sprang back, parrying the first thrust. A shout of approval rose from the savage audience on the ledge above. Then the two men settled down to a stern, relentless dual. Frug outweighed his opponent by fifty pounds, but the other had the advantage of youth and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

agility. The former sought to rush Daj and bear him down by sheer physical weight, but Daj was too quick for him. Each time, he leaped aside; and on Frug's third attempt, Daj dodged as he had before; then he wheeled quickly and jabbed his spear into the Bastian's side.

The mammothmen shouted their approval. "Kill! Kill!" they screamed. Frug roared with pain and rage, wheeled again and lumbered down upon Daj. This time the Lo-harian stood his ground until Frug was almost upon him; then he crouched suddenly beneath the extended weapon of his adversary and thrust viciously upward into the belly of the Bastian. As Frug writhed, screaming, upon the ground, Daj wrenched his weapon from the other's belly and plunged it through his heart. Thus died the Chief, Frug of Basti; thus was La-ja avenged by one of her own clan.

Amidst the shouts and yells of the mammothmen, the man from Amdar shouted, "Look! Tarags! There," and pointed toward the opposite side of the canyon.

With the others, von Horst looked. The grating that had been before the entrance to the cave had been raised by warriors from above, and now five great tarags were slinking onto the floor of the canyon— five mighty, saber-toothed tigers.

"Tandors!" exclaimed the man from Go-hal. "They are turning the tandors loose on us. They give us a spear and a knife to fight tarags and tandors."

"They think well of us as fighting men," said von Horst, grinning, as he glanced toward the upper end of the canyon and saw that the mammoths had been released from the corral.

There were five mammoths, bulls that were untamable killers. One of them towered above his fellows, a huge monster, bellowing angrily as it caught the scent of the tarags and the men. The five moved ponderously down toward the center of the canyon, while the great cats crossed directly toward the five men awaiting their doom. Thus the paths of the beasts seemed certain to meet before the tarags reached the men. But one of the latter trotted ahead, so that it seemed apparent that it would cross in front of the mammoths and reach the four prisoners without interruption.

Von Horst was sufficiently familiar with the tempers of both mammoths and tigers to know that, being hereditary enemies, they would attack one another if they came in contact. Just what this would mean to himself and his fellow prisoners he could only guess. Perhaps enough of them might be disabled in the ensuing battle to permit the men to dispatch those that were not killed. Whether or not they would be any better off then, he did not know. It might be that those who survived would be released. He asked Daj of Lo-har about it.

"The mammothmen never let a prisoner escape if they can help it," replied Daj. "If we are not killed by the beasts, we shall be killed in some other way."

"If we can reach the upper end of the canyon," said von Horst, "we may be able to escape. I see a little trail there running from beside the corral to the summit. I have been told that if we can escape in that way the mammothmen will not pursue us, as it would take them into a country that, for some reason, they never enter."

"The tarags and the tandors will never permit us to reach the upper end of the canyon," replied Daj.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The tarag that was in the lead was preparing to charge.

He crouched low, now, and crept forward. His sinuous tail twitched nervously. His blazing eyes were fixed upon von Horst who stood a little in advance of his fellows. Behind this tarag the others had met the tandors. The canyon thundered to the roaring and trumpeting and screaming of the challenging beasts.

"Run for the upper end of the canyon," von Horst called back to his companions. "Some of you may escape."

The tarag charged, his lips stretched in a hideous snarl that bared his great saber teeth to the gums, his jaws distended. Roaring, he charged upon the puny man-thing. Once before had von Horst stopped the charge of a tarag with a stone tipped spear. That time he had accorded the palm to luck. It seemed incredible that such luck would hold again. Yet, had it been wholly luck? Skill and strength and iron nerve had been contributing factors in his victory. Would they hold again against this devil-faced demon?

As the tarag rose in its final spring, von Horst dropped to one knee and planted the butt of the spear firmly against the ground. He was very cool and deliberate, though he had to move with lightning speed. He held the point of the spear forward, aiming it at the broad white chest of the sabertooth; then, as the beast struck, the man rolled to one side, leaping quickly to his feet.

The spear sank deep into the chest of the tarag, and with a hideous scream the beast rolled in the dust of the canyon floor. But it was up again in an instant seeking with ferocious growls and terrifying roars the author of its hurt. It turned its terrible eyes upon von Horst and tried to reach him; but the butt of the spear, sticking into the ground, drove the point farther into its body; and it stopped to claw at the offending object. Its roars, now, were deafening; but von Horst saw that it was reduced to nothing more menacing than noise and looked about him to see what chance he had to reach the upper end of the canyon. His companions were moving in that direction. To his right, the tarags and mammoths were engaged in a titanic struggle. Three of the former had centered their attack upon the smallest of the bulls. The other four bulls stood in a little group, tail to tail, while the remaining tarag, the largest of the five, circled them.

Von Horst moved in the direction of the upper end of the canyon. He hoped that he might go unnoticed by the beasts, but the great tarag that was circling the four bulls saw him. It stopped in its tracks, eyeing him; and then it came for him. No longer was there a spear with which to dispute the outcome of the encounter with the fanged and taloned beast—the outcome that now must be a foregone conclusion.

The man gauged the distance to the end of the canyon. Could he reach it before the mighty carnivore overtook him? He doubted it. Then he saw the huge bull that he had noticed before break from the group and start forward as though to intercept the tarag. Von Horst imagined that the tandor thought the great cat was trying to escape him and was thus emboldened to pursue and attack.

Now there might be a chance to escape. If the mammoth overtook the sabertooth before the latter reached von Horst; or if the sabertooth's charge were diverted by a threatened attack by the mammoth; then he might easily reach safety while all of the animals in the canyon were occupied with one another. With this slender hope to speed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

him on, he started to run. But the tarag was not to be denied this easy prey. It paid no attention to the mammoth as it continued on in pursuit of the man. Von Horst, glancing back across a shoulder, was astounded by the terrific speed of the huge mammoth. Like a thoroughbred, it raced to head off the carnivore. The latter gained rapidly upon von Horst. It was a question which would reach him first, and to the man it seemed only a question as to the manner of his death. Would he die with those terrible talons at his vitals, or would he be tossed high in air and then trampled beneath tons of prehistoric flesh?

Upon the rim of the canyon the savage cavemen were howling their delight and approval of this exciting race with death. Mamth had discovered that three of his prisoners had located the path at the upper end of the canyon and were on their way to freedom. That the path was not guarded was due to the fact that the mammothmen believed that no one but themselves knew of it, and it was so faintly traced upon the canyon's wall that no one who did not know of its existence could have discovered it.

But now that Mamth saw that the three had reached the end of the canyon and started to ascend, he hurriedly sent warriors to intercept them. Whether they would reach the head of the canyon in time to do so was problematical.

Below, on the floor of the canyon, the tarag leaped to seize von Horst. The savage beast was apparently either indifferent to the close proximity of the mammoth racing now parallel with it, or else it sought to wrest the prey from its competitor. Then a strange thing happened. The mammoth's trunk shot out with lightning speed and circled the body of the tarag, halting its spring in midair. Once the mighty Titan swung the screaming, clawing creature to and fro; then, with all its great strength, it hurled it high in the air and to one side.

Whether by intent or chance it hurled it to the rim of the canyon among the spectators, scattering them in all directions. Infuriated, and only slightly injured, the tarag charged among the fleeing tribesmen, striking them down to right and left.

But none of this von Horst witnessed. He was too much engrossed with his own perilous adventure. And perilous it seemed. For no sooner had the mammoth disposed of the tarag than it encircled the man with its powerful trunk and lifted him high in the air. To von Horst it signified the end. He breathed a silent prayer that it might be soon over and without suffering. As the beast wheeled he had a fleeting glimpse of the melee on the ledge above—the mad tarag, a score of spearmen rallying courageously to meet its savage attack; then he saw the three tarags and the four mammoths engaged in a terrific battle to the accompaniment of trumpeting, screams, growls, and roars that were almost deafening.

The bull that was carrying him aloft moved straight down the canyon at a shuffling trot. Von Horst wondered why he had not been tossed or trampled. Was the creature playing with him to prolong his torture? What was in the sagacious brain of the ponderous monster? Now the trunk curled back, and to von Horst's amazement he was lowered gently to the beast's neck. For a moment the trunk held him there until he gained his equilibrium; then it was removed.

Past the madly battling beasts the mammoth bore von Horst toward the lower end of

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the little canyon. The man settled himself more firmly back of the great ears which he grasped as additional support, and as he did so he chanced to glance down. Upon the mammoth's left jowl grew a path of white hair!

Ah Am, ma Rahna—Old White, the Killer! Could it be that the great beast recognized him? Was it repaying the man for the service he had rendered it? Von Horst could scarcely believe this; yet why else had it refrained from killing him? What was it doing now other than seeking to save him?

Von Horst was well aware of the great sagacity of these huge beasts and the unusual wisdom ascribed to Old White by the mammothmen; so it was this knowledge and the hope that springs eternal that tended to convince him against his better judgment that he had found a faithful friend and a mighty ally. But what might it avail him? They were still trapped in the little canyon in which blood-mad beasts battled to the death. If he were at the upper end of the canyon, he might escape by the trail; but he was not—he was being borne toward the lower end across which was a massive gate of logs.

That Old White was seeking escape from the canyon in this direction was soon evident. He was directing his shuffling trot straight for the barrier. Now, as he approached it, he increased his gait; and as he came within fifty feet of it, he lowered his head and charged.

Von Horst was aghast. Ahead, upon the instant of impact with the logs of the barrier, lay death for both of them. He thought of slipping from the back of the charging beast. But why? Death beneath the fangs and talons of the great cats might be far more hideous than that which lay just ahead—the terrific impact and then oblivion. There would be no suffering.

The mammoth seems a slow moving, ungainly animal; but it is far from such. Now, in the full rush of its charge, Old White bore down upon the gate of logs with the speed of an express train—a living battering ram of incalculable power. Von Horst lay flat, his arms hooked beneath the great ears. He waited for the end, and he had faced so many dangers in savage Pellucidar since he disembarked from the O-220 that he was not greatly concerned by the imminence of death. Perhaps, now that he had lost La-ja, it would be a welcome surcease of constant battling for survival. After all, was life worth this unremitting strife?

It was all over in a split second. The mighty skull crashed into the heavy barrier. Logs, splintered like matchwood, flew in all directions. The great beast stumbled to its knees over the lower bars, nearly unseating the man; then caught itself and rushed from the little canyon to freedom.

THAT HE WAS free seemed almost incredible to von Horst. A veritable miracle, the reward for his humane treatment of his giant savior, had wrought his salvation in an extremity from which only a miracle might have saved him. But what of the future? He had a mount, but what could he do about it? Where was it taking him? Could he control it? Could he even escape it? And if he did, where was he to go? He knew now that there was practically no hope that he might ever find Sari.

Even though he might retrace his steps to The Forest of Death, through which he must pass to pick up Dangar's trail, he knew that it would be suicidal to enter that grim

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and forbidding wood.

He would have liked to make his way to Lo-har because that was La-ja's country. From the point at which he had left The Forest of Death he knew the general direction of Lo-har, and so he decided that when he was again a free agent he would seek out the land of La-ja. There might always be at least the hope that she found her way there. That she could, though, through this fearsome land of grotesque and terrible dangers appeared such a remote possibility as to verge closely upon the impossible.

And how was he to reach it even though chance might put him on the right trail? He was unarmed except for the crude stone knife the mammothmen had given him and the now useless belt of cartridges which he had clung to for some reason almost as inexplicable as the fact that his captors had not taken it from him.

It is true that the time he had spent in Pellucidar and his increased knowledge of her ways had given him greater confidence in his ability to take care of himself, but it had also impressed upon him a healthy respect for the dangers that he knew must confront him. So much for the future. How about the present?

Old White had reduced his speed and was ambling down the main canyon away from the village of the mammothmen and the little canyon. No sign of pursuit had developed, and von Horst thought it probable that the tribesmen had been so occupied with the saber-toothed tiger rampant among them that they had failed to notice the sudden departure of Old White and himself.

Presently the mammoth came out of the foothills and set its course down toward the river upon the banks of which von Horst had come upon it and where he had later been captured by the mammothmen. The gentle slope of the plain ahead was dotted with feeding animals, sight of which raised the question in von Horst's mind as to how he was to procure food with only a stone knife as a weapon. He was also concerned with the destination of Old White. Were the animal to leave him in the open plain he might never pass through these great herds to the trees by the river, and he must reach the sanctuary of trees if he were to have even a chance for survival.

There he could find partial concealment and the materials for the bow and arrows and the spear he must have to wage the eternal battle for life which constitutes the whole existence of man in that savage world.

But now Old White was veering off to the left on a course parallel to the river. Von Horst did not want to go in that direction, for the country lay open and only sparsely treed as far as the eye could reach. Trees, plenty of them, trees beside water he must reach.

He had witnessed the unsuccessful attempt to tame Old White. He had seen him obey the signals of his rider before he killed him, and he wondered if the great beast remembered what he had learned; or, remembering, if he would obey. Perhaps an attempt to guide him would recall to the mammoth the indignities that had been heaped upon him by his captors and the manner in which he had rid himself of his last rider.

Von Horst hesitated a moment; then he shrugged and kicked Old White with his left foot. Nothing happened. He kicked again several times. Now the beast changed its direction toward the right, and von Horst kept on kicking until it was headed straight for

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the river. Thereafter he kept the beast on this course by the signals he had learned from the mammothmen—that they had both learned thus.

When the river was reached von Horst struck Old White a sharp blow on top of the head, and the beast stopped; then the man slipped to the ground. He wondered what the animal would do now, but it did nothing—only stood placidly waving its trunk to and fro. Von Horst stepped in front of its shoulder and stroked its trunk. “Good boy,” he said in quiet tones, as a man speaks to his horse. Old White wound his trunk about the man gently; then he released him, and von Horst walked away toward the trees and the river. He lay down on his belly and drank, and the mammoth came and drank beside him.

Von Horst could not know how long he remained there among the trees beside the river. He caught fish and gathered nuts and fruit and ate and slept several times; and he fashioned a bow and arrows and a good, stout spear. He made his spear with a thought to tarags. It was longer than the spears he had had before, but not too long; and it was heavy. The wood of which it was made was long-grained and pliant. It would not break easily.

While he was there he saw Old White often. The great beast fed in a great patch of bamboo that grew beside the river only a short distance from the tree in which von Horst had constructed a rude shelter. Often, when not feeding, it came and stood beneath the tree that housed the man. Upon such occasions von Horst made it a point always to handle the beast and talk to it, for it offered him the only companionship that he had. After awhile he came to look forward to Old White’s return, and worry a little if he seemed gone overlong. It was a strange friendship, this between a man and a mammoth; and in it von Horst thought he recognized a parallel to the accidents that had resulted eons before in the beginning of the domestication of animals upon the outer crust.

His weapons completed, von Horst determined to set off upon his search for Lo-har. He did not expect ever to find the country, but he had to have an objective. It was just as likely that he would stumble upon Sari as that he should find Lo-har, but he could not simply remain where he was waiting for death by accident or old age. Furthermore, a sense of humor as well as curiosity impelled him to wish to see the fabulous Gaz.

Old White was standing under a nearby tree, out of the heat of the noonday sun, swaying gently to and fro; and von Horst walked over to give him a final good-by caress, for he had grown to be genuinely fond of his gigantic friend and companion.

“I’m going to miss you, old boy,” he said. “You and I’ve been places and done things. Good luck to you!” and he gave the rough trunk a final slap as he turned and walked away into the unknown upon his hopeless quest.

As his eyes scanned the broad, horizonless vista that melted into a soft vignette at the uttermost range of human eyesight it was difficult to reconcile the complete primitiveness of this untouched world with his knowledge that a bare five-hundred miles beneath his feet might be a city teeming with the traffic and the concerns of countless humans like himself who went their various ways and lived their lives confronted by no greater menace than a reckless driver or a banana peel thrown carelessly upon the pavement.

It amused him to speculate upon what his friends might say could they see him now,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the trim, sophisticated Lieutenant Frederick Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst naked but for a loincloth, a man of the Pleistocene if ever there was one. And then his thoughts turned back to Pellucidar and Laja. He wondered why she disliked him so, and he winced at the insistent realization this reverie conjured. He had sought to deny it and beat it down below the threshold of his consciousness, but it persisted with the insistent determination of a stricken conscience. He loved her; he loved this little barbarian who was as unconscious of the existence of an alphabet as of finger-bowls.

He plodded on sunk deep in reverie, which is no way to plod Pellucidar where one must be either very quick or very dead. He did not hear the thing that walked behind him, for it walked on padded feet—he was thinking of La-ja of Lo-har. Then, suddenly, he was startled into consciousness of his surroundings and the need for constant vigilance; but too late. Something seized him around the waist and swept him off his feet. As he was lifted high in air he squirmed and looked down into the rough and hairy face of Old White; then he was lowered gently to the broad neck. He almost laughed aloud in his relief. Instantly he felt new hope for the future—that will companionship do, even the companionship of a dumb beast.

“You old son-of-a-gun!” he exclaimed. “You nearly scared the breechcloth off me, but I am glad to see you! Guess you get lonesome, too, eh? Neither of us seems to have many friends. Well, we’ll stick together as long as you’ll stick.”

Through dangers that must otherwise have seemed fatal Old White bore the man-thing for whom he had conceived this strange attachment. Even the mighty tarag slunk aside out of the path of the mammoth; no bull of the great herds through which they passed charged. Once a thipdar circled about them, the great Pteranodon of the Lias which could carry off a full grown bull Bos. Beneath the shadow of its twenty foot wing spread they moved, the mammoth unconcerned, the man apprehensive; but it did not dive to the attack.

They stopped at intervals to feed and water and to sleep; but as time meant nothing in this timeless world, von Horst made no effort to compute it. He only knew that they must be a long way from Ja-ru. Often he walked to rest his muscles, and Old White plodded so close to him that his hairy trunk usually touched the naked body of the man.

To occupy his mind, von Horst had taught the beast several things—to raise him to its head upon command and to lower him to the ground, to kneel and to lie down, to walk or trot or charge at the proper signal, to lift and carry objects, to place his head against a tree and push it down, or to encircle one with its trunk and uproot it.

Old White seemed to enjoy learning and to be proud of his accomplishments. That he was highly intelligent, von Horst had long realized; and there was one characteristic of the mighty beast that proved it to the man beyond doubt. That was Old White’s sense of humor. It was so well developed that there could be no mistaking it, and there were occasions when von Horst could have sworn that the mammoth grinned in appreciation of his own jokes, one of which was to seize the man by an ankle from behind and swing him into the air; but he never dropped him nor ever hurt him, always lowering him to the ground gently. Again, if he thought von Horst had slept too long, he would place a foot upon his body and pretend to trample him, holding him down; or he would fill his trunk with water and shower him. The man never knew what to expect nor when to expect it,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but he soon learned that Old White would never harm him.

Von Horst had no idea how far they had travelled; but he knew it must have been a considerable distance, yet they had passed no village nor seen a human being. He marvelled at the vast expanse of uninhabited country given over entirely to wild animals. Thus had been the outer crust at one time. Yet, as he thought of conditions there now, it seemed incredible.

Whether he was nearer to Lo-har than before he could not guess. Often the excursion seemed hair-brained and hopeless. But what else was there for him to do? He might as well keep moving whether in the right direction or the wrong. Had he had a human companion—had La-ja been with him—he might have been reconciled to settle permanently in one of the many beautiful valleys he had crossed; but to live always alone in one place was unthinkable. And so he pushed on, exploring a new world that no one might ever know about but himself.

Each new rise of ground that he approached aroused his enthusiasm for the unknown. What lay beyond the summit?

What new scenes would be revealed? Thus once, as Old White moved ponderously up a slight acclivity, the man's mind conjectured what might lie beyond the summit they were approaching, his anticipation of new scenes and his enthusiasm seemingly undiminished; then he heard a deep bellow, followed by others. Mingled with them seemed to be the voices of men.

To von Horst men meant enemies, so definitely had he habituated himself to the reactions of the stone age; but he determined to have a look at these people.

Perhaps they were Loharians. Perhaps he had reached Lo-har! The sounds suggested men driving a herd of cattle in which were many bulls, for the deep tones of the bellows gave color to his belief that there were mostly bulls beyond the ridge.

Slipping from Old White's back, von Horst ordered the great beast to remain where it was; then he crept stealthily forward, hoping to reach the summit of the ridge unobserved. In this he was successful, and a moment later he was looking down upon a scene that might well have made him question the credibility of his eyesight.

He lay upon the edge of a low cliff, and below him were four creatures such as might have materialized only from a bad dream. They had the bodies of men-squat, stocky men. Their faces, their shoulders, and their breasts were covered with long, brown hair. From opposite sides of their foreheads protruded short, heavy horns much like the horns of a bison; and they had tails with a bushy tuft of hair at the end. From their throats issued the bull-like bellows he had heard, as well as the speech of men.

They carried no weapons; and it was evident that they were being held at bay by some creature or creatures that were hidden from the sight of von Horst by the overhanging of the cliff upon which he lay, for every time they started to approach closer to the cliff fragments of stone would fly out and drive them back. This always set them to bellowing angrily; and sometimes one or another of them would stamp the ground or paw up the dust with a foot, for all the world like a mad bull; so that von Horst thought of them then and always as the bison-men.

From the fact that missiles were being hurled at these creatures by their prey, von

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Horst assumed that the latter might be human beings; though, of course, in Pellucidar they might be any strange variety of man or beast. That they were bison-men, he doubted; as he noticed that none of the four threw rocks in return, as he was reasonably certain they would have done had they been sufficiently intelligent.

Occasionally he caught a word or two as the four spoke to one another, and he discovered that they spoke the common language of the human beings of Pellucidar. Presently one of them raised his voice and shouted to whatever it was they had brought to bay at the foot of the cliff.

"Stop throwing rocks, gilak," he said. "It will only go worse with you when we get you, and we shall get you—be sure of that. You have neither food nor water; so you must come out or starve."

"What do you want of us?" demanded a voice from the bottom of the cliff.

"We want the woman," replied the bison-man who had previously spoken.

"You don't want me?" demanded the voice.

"Only to kill you; but if you give us the woman, we will spare you."

"How do I know you'll keep your word?"

"We do not lie," replied the bison-man. "Bring her here and we will let you go."

"I bring her," announced the voice from below.

"The son of a pig!" ejaculated von Horst beneath his breath.

A moment later he saw a man emerge from below the overhang of the cliff, dragging a woman by the hair. Instantly he was upon his feet, charged with horror and with rage; for at the first glance he had recognized them —Skruf and La-ja.

A sheer drop of thirty or forty feet to the ground below left him temporarily helpless, and for a moment he could only stand and look down upon the tragedy; then he fitted an arrow to his bow, but Skruf was partially shielded by the body of the girl. Von Horst could not shoot without endangering her.

"La-ja!" he cried. The girl tried to turn her head back in the direction of his voice. Skruf and the bison-men looked up at the figure standing upon the top of the cliff. "One side, La-ja!" he called. "Go to one side!"

Instantly she swung to the right, turning Skruf sideways so that he was fully exposed to the archer whose bow was already drawn. The bowstring twanged. Skruf screamed and went down clutching at the feathered shaft sunk deep in his body, and as he fell he released his hold upon La-ja's hair.

"Run!" commanded von Horst. "Run parallel to the cliff and I will follow until I find a way down."

Already, recovered from their first surprise, the bison-men were running toward the girl; but she had a little start, and with luck she might outdistance them. Their heavy, squat figures did not seem designed for speed.

Von Horst turned and called to Old White to follow; then he ran along the cliff-top a little behind Laja. Almost at once he realized that the appearance of the bison-men belied their agility—they were overhauling the girl. Again he fitted an arrow to his bow. Just for an instant he paused—long enough to take aim at the leading bison-man and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

release the shaft; then he sprang forward, but he had lost ground that he could not regain. However, he had temporarily widened the gap between Laja and her pursuers; for the leading bison-man lay groveling on the ground, an arrow through his back.

The others were closing up, and again von Horst was forced to stop and shoot. As before, the girl's closest pursuer pitched to the ground. The fellow rolled over and over, but when he stopped he lay very still. Now there were only two, but again von Horst had lost distance. He tried to gain on them but he could not. At last he halted and sent two more arrows after the remaining bison-men. The nearer fell, but he missed the other. Twice after that he loosed his shafts; but the last one fell short, and he knew that the man was out of range—out of range and rapidly gaining on his quarry. Just ahead of the fleeing girl loomed a forest of giant trees. If she could reach these she might elude her pursuer, and she was fleet of foot.

In silence the three raced on, von Horst on the cliff-top barely maintaining his ground; then the girl disappeared among the boles of the great trees; and a moment later the bison-man followed her. Von Horst was frantic. The interminable cliff offered no avenue of descent. There was nothing to do but continue on until he found such a place, but in the meantime what would become of La-ja?

To have found her so unexpectedly, to have been so close to her, and then to have lost her left him heartsick and hopeless. Still, he knew now that she lived; and that was something. And now, close behind him, he heard the familiar trumpeting of Old White; and a moment later a hairy trunk encircled him and swung him to the now familiar seat in the hollow back of the massive skull.

Just beyond the edge of the forest they came upon a rift in the escarpment; and here the mammoth, finding precarious foothold, picked his way carefully down. Von Horst turned him back to the point at which La-ja had disappeared; but here he was forced to dismount, as the trees grew too closely to permit the great beast to enter the forest, and he could neither uproot nor push over the giant boles.

As von Horst left Old White to enter the forest he had a premonition that this was the last time that he would ever see his faithful friend and ally; and it was with a heavy heart that he passed into the grim, forbidding wood.

Only for an instant was his mind occupied with thoughts of Old White, for at a distance he heard a faint scream; and then a voice called his name twice— "Von! Von!"—the voice of the woman he loved.

GUIDED ONLY BY the memory of that faint cry in the distance, von Horst pushed on into the forest. Never had he seen trees of such size growing in such close proximity, often so near to one another that there was just room for him to pass between. There was no trail, and because of the zigzag course he was forced to pursue he soon lost all sense of direction. Twice he had called La-ja's name aloud, hoping that she would reply and thus give him a new clue to her whereabouts, but there had been no answer. He realized that about all he had accomplished had been to apprise her captor that he was being pursued and thus put him on his guard; so, though he moved as rapidly as he could, he was most watchful.

As he hurried on he became more and more imbued with a sense of frustration and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the futility of his search, feeling that he was quite probably moving in circles and getting nowhere. He was even impressed by the probability that he might never even find his way out of this labyrinthine maze of gloomy trees, to say nothing of reaching La-ja in time to be of any service to her. And thus his mind was occupied by gloomy thoughts when he came suddenly to the end of the forest. Before him lay the mouth of a canyon leading into low but rugged hills, and here at last was a trail. It wound, well marked, into the canyon.

With renewed hope von Horst stepped confidently out to follow wherever the way might lead; for a brief examination told his now practiced eyes that someone had recently entered the canyon at this point, and faintly in the dust of the trail he saw the imprint of a tiny foot. The canyon was little more than a narrow, rocky gorge winding snakelike into the hills; and as he proceeded he passed the mouths of other similar gorges that entered it at intervals; but the main trail was plain, and he continued upon it, certain now that he must soon overtake La-ja and her captor.

He had been for some little time in the gorge and was becoming impatient with each fresh disappointment when he rounded a bend and did not see those he sought ahead of him, when he heard a noise behind. He turned quickly and saw a bison-man creeping stealthily upon him. The instant that the fellow realized he had been discovered he voiced a bellow that might have issued from the throat of an angry bull. It was answered from down the gorge and from up, and then others came rapidly into view both in front and behind.

Von Horst was trapped. Upon either side the walls of the canyon, while not high, were unscalable; and behind him were bison-men cutting off retreat, and in front were bison-men effectually blocking his advance. Now they were all bellowing. The rocky walls of the gorge reverberated the angry, bestial chorus of challenge and of menace. They had been waiting for him. Von Horst knew it now. They had heard him call to La-ja. They had known he was following, and they had waited in the concealment of one of the gorges he had passed. How easily they had trapped him. But what might he have done to prevent it? How else might he search for La-ja without following where she went?

What was he to do now? The bison-men were coming toward him very slowly. They seemed to hold him in great respect. He wondered if the abductor of Laja had had either the time or opportunity to tell his fellows of the havoc this strange gilak had played with the four that had first met him. That was one of the tantalizing characteristics of the inner world—that one might never know the measure of elapsed time, which might easily gauge the difference between life and death.

“What are you doing here in our country?” demanded the nearest of the bison-men.

“I have come for the woman,” replied von Horst. “She is mine. Where is she?”

“Who are you? We never saw a gilak like you before, or one who could send death from a long way off on little sticks.”

“Get me the woman,” demanded von Horst, “or I’ll send death to you all.” He withdrew an arrow from his quiver and fitted it to his bow.

“You cannot kill us all,” said the creature. “You have not as many sticks as there are Ganaks.”

“What are Ganaks?” asked von Horst.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"We are Ganaks. We will take you to Drovan. If he says not to kill you, we will not kill you."

"Is the woman there?"

"Yes."

"Then I will go. Where is she?"

"Follow the Ganaks in front of you up the gorge."

They all moved on then in the direction that von Horst had been going, and presently they came to a large, open valley in which there were many trees dotted picturesquely over gently rolling ground. Out upon the plain a short distance lay what appeared to be a circular, palisaded village; and toward this the bison-men led the way.

As he came nearer, von Horst saw that there were fields of growing crops outside the village and that in these fields men and women were working—human beings like himself, not Ganaks; but there were many Ganak bulls loitering around. These performed no labor.

A single small gateway led into the village which consisted of a complete circle of mud huts, one adjoining the other except in this one spot where the gateway lay. Trees grew all around the circle in front of the huts, spreading shade trees. In the center of the large compound was a cluster of huts, and here too there were shade trees.

To these central huts his guides led von Horst, and here he saw a large bison-man standing in the shade switching the flies from his legs with his tufted tail. Facing him stood La-ja with her captor, and half surrounding them was a curious throng of Ganaks.

As the new party approached, the big bull looked in their direction. He had massive horns, and the hair upon his face and shoulders and chest was heavy. His small, round eyes, set wide apart, were red-rimmed and fierce as they glowered menacingly at von Horst. His head was lowered, much after the manner of a beast's.

"What is this?" he demanded, indicating von Horst.

"This is the gilak that killed the three who were with me," said La-ja's captor.

"Tell me again how he killed them," directed the big bull.

"He sent little sticks to kill them," said the other.

"Little sticks do not kill, Trun. You are a fool or a liar."

"Little sticks did kill the three that were with me and another that was there, a gilak. I saw them kill, Drovan. See them? They are in that thing upon his back."

"Fetch a slave," commanded Drovan, "an old one that is not much good."

Von Horst stood there gazing at La-ja. He scarcely saw or heard what was going on about him. La-ja was looking at him. Her face was almost expressionless.

"So you are not dead yet," she said.

"I heard you call me, La-ja," he said. "I came as soon as I could."

She raised her chin. "I did not call you," she said haughtily.

Von Horst was dumbfounded. He had heard her call, plainly, twice. Suddenly he became angry. His face flushed. "You are a little fool," he said. "You are absolutely without appreciation or gratitude. You are not worth saving." Then he turned his back on her.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Instantly he regretted his words; but he was hurt— hurt as he never had been in his life before. And he was too proud to retract what he had said.

A bison-man approached bringing an old slave woman with him. He led her to Drovan. The chief gave her a rough push.

“Go over there and stand,” he ordered.

The old woman moved slowly away—a bent and helpless old creature.

“That’s far enough,” shouted Drovan. “Stand there, where you are.”

“You!” he bellowed, pointing at von Horst. “What is your name?”

The man eyed the half-beast insolently. He was mad all the way through—mad at himself and the world. “When you speak to me, don’t bellow,” he said.

Drovan lashed his legs angrily with his tail and lowered his head like a mad bull about to charge. He took a few slow steps toward von Horst; and then he stopped and pawed the ground with one foot and bellowed, but the man did not retreat, nor did he show fear.

Suddenly the chief espied the old slave woman standing out in the compound as he had directed her; then he turned again to von Horst. He pointed at the old woman.

“If your sticks will kill,” he said, “kill her. But I do not believe that they will kill.”

“My sticks will kill,” said von Horst. “The Ganaks will see that they will kill.”

He took a few steps out into the compound toward the old slave woman and fitted an arrow to his bow; then he turned toward Drovan and pointed at La-ja.

“Will you set that girl and myself free if I show you that my little sticks will kill?” he demanded.

“No,” growled the chief.

Von Horst shrugged. “Let it be on your own shoulders,” he said; and with that he drew back the feathered shaft, and before anyone could guess his intention or interfere he drove it through Drovan’s heart.

Instantly the compound was a riot of bellowing bulls.

They fell upon von Horst before he could fit another arrow to his bow and by weight of numbers bore him to the ground, striking him with their fists and trying to gore him with their horns; but there were so many of them that they interfered with one another.

The man was pretty nearly done for when the attention of his attackers was attracted by a voice of authority. “Do not kill,” it commanded. “Let him up. It is I, Kru the Chief, who speaks.”

Instantly the bulls abandoned von Horst and turned on the speaker.

“Who says Kru is chief?” demanded one. “It is I, Tant, who will be chief now that Drovan is dead.”

During the argument von Horst had dragged himself to his feet. He was half stunned for a moment, but he soon gathered his wits. Quickly he hunted for his bow and found it. Some of the arrows that had dropped from his quiver during the melee he found and retrieved. Now his mind was alert. He looked about him. All the bulls were watching the two claimants for the chieftainship, but some of them were ranging themselves closer to Kru than to Tant. A few went hesitantly to Tant’s side. It looked like Kru to von Horst. He

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

stepped over near those who were assembling around Kru.

Surreptitiously he fitted an arrow to his bow. He knew that he was taking a wild chance; and his better judgment told him to mind his own business, but he was still angry and indifferent as to whether he lived or not. Suddenly he straightened up. "Kru is chief!" he cried. Simultaneously he drove an arrow into Tant's chest. "Are there any others who will not accept Kru as chief?" he demanded.

Some of them who had gathered around Tant ran to strike him down; they charged with lowered horns like bulls. But those about Kru charged to meet them; and as they fought, von Horst moved backward slowly until he stood with his back against the chiefs hut. Close to him stood La-ja. He paid no attention to her, although it was plain to her that he was aware of her presence.

The man was engrossed in the strange tactics of these half-beasts. When they did not clinch they dove with lowered heads for the belly of an antagonist, seeking to disembowel him with their heavy horns. Oftentimes they met head on with such terrific force that both were knocked down. When they clinched, each antagonist seized another by the shoulders; and, straining and tugging, they sought to gore each other in the face or neck or chest.

It was a scene of savage fury made more terrifying by the bellowing and snorting of the combatants; but it was soon over, for those who opposed Kru were few in numbers and without a leader. One by one, those who survived broke away and retreated, leaving the field to Kru.

The new chief, overcome by his importance, strutted about pompously. He sent immediately for the women of Drovan and Tant, of which there were about thirty; and after selecting half of them for himself turned the others over to his followers to be divided by lot.

In the meantime von Horst and La-ja remained in the background practically unnoticed by the bison-men, nor did they call attention to themselves, as it was obvious that the bulls were worked up to a frenzy of hysterical excitement by all that had so recently transpired and by the sight and smell of blood. Presently, however, the eyes of an old bull fell upon them; and he commenced to bellow deep in his chest and paw the ground. He approached them, lowering his head as though about to charge. Von Horst fitted an arrow to his bow. The bull hesitated; then he turned toward Kru.

"The gilaks," he said. "When do we kill the gilaks or set them to work?"

Kru looked in the direction of the speaker. Von Horst waited for the chiefs answer. It had been upon the hope of his gratitude that he had based his hopes for liberty for himself and La-ja, for he was still thinking of the girl's welfare. He found that he could not do otherwise, no matter how ungrateful she might be. He wondered how much gratitude, then, he might expect from this brutal bison-man if La-ja accorded him none.

"Well," said the old bull, "do we kill the gilaks or do we put them to work in the fields?"

"Kill the she!" cried one of the women.

"No," growled Kru, "the she shall not be killed. Take them away and put them in a hut and guard them. Later Kru will decide what to do with the man."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Von Horst and La-ja were taken to a filthy hut. They were not bound. The man's weapons were not taken away from him, and he could only assume that their captors were too stupid and unimaginative to sense the necessity for such precautions. Laja went to one side of the hut and sat down, von Horst to the other. They did not speak. The man did not even look at the woman, but her eyes were often upon him.

He was unhappy and almost without hope. If she had been kind to him, even civil, he might have envisioned a future worth fighting for with enthusiasm; but now, without hope of her love, there seemed nothing. The knowledge that he loved her aroused in him only self-contempt, while it should have been a source of pride. He felt only a dull sense of duty to her because she was a woman. He knew that he would try to save her. He knew that he would fight for her, but he felt no elation.

Presently he lay down and slept. He dreamed that he slept in a clean bed between cool sheets, and that when he awoke he put on fresh linen and well pressed clothes and went down to a sumptuous dinner at a perfectly appointed table. A waiter, bringing a salver of food, bumped against his shoulder.

He awoke to see a woman standing beside him. She had kicked his shoulder. "Wake up," she said. "Here is your fodder."

She dumped an armful of fresh-cut grass and some vegetables on the filthy floor beside him. "It is for the woman, too," she said.

Von Horst sat up and looked at the woman. She was not a Ganak, but a human being like himself. "What is the grass for?" he asked.

"To eat," she replied.

"We do not eat grass," he said, "and there are not enough vegetables here to make a meal for one."

"You will eat grass here or you will starve," said the woman. "We slaves are not allowed many vegetables."

"How about meat?" inquired von Horst.

"The Ganaks do not eat meat; so there is no meat to eat. I have been here for more sleeps than I can remember, and I have never seen anyone eat meat. You'll get used to the grass after awhile."

"Do they put all their prisoners to work in the fields?" asked von Horst.

"You never can tell what they will do. As a rule they keep the women and work them in the fields until they get too old; then they kill them. If they are short of slaves they keep the men for awhile; otherwise they kill them immediately. They have kept me for many sleeps. I belong to Splay. They will give this woman to some one, because she is young. They will probably kill you, as they have plenty of slaves now—more than they care to feed."

When the woman had gone, von Horst gathered up the vegetables and placed them beside La-ja. The girl looked up at him. Her eyes flashed.

"Why do you do such things?" she demanded. "I do not want you to do anything for me. I do not want to like you."

Von Horst shrugged. "You are succeeding very well," he said, dryly.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

She mumbled something that he could not catch and commenced to divide the vegetables into two parts. "You eat your share and I shall eat mine," she said.

"There are not enough for one, let alone two. You'd better keep them all," he insisted. "Anyway, I don't care much for raw vegetables."

"Then you can leave them. I'll not eat them. If you don't like the vegetables, eat the grass."

Von Horst relapsed into silence and commenced to gnaw on a tuber. It was better than nothing—that was about all he could say for it. As the girl ate she occasionally glanced at the man furtively. Once he glanced up and caught her eyes on him, and she looked away quickly.

"Why do you dislike me, La-ja?" he asked. "What have I done?"

"I don't wish to talk about it. I don't wish to talk to you at all."

"You're not fair," he remonstrated. "If I knew what I'd done, I might correct it. It would be much pleasanter if we were friends, for we may have to see a lot of each other before we get to Lo-har."

"We'll never get to Lo-har."

"Don't give up hope. These people are stupid. We ought to be able to outwit them and escape."

"We won't; but if we did, you wouldn't be going to Lo-har."

"I'm going wherever you go," he replied doggedly.

"Why do you want to go to Lo-har? You'd only be killed. Gaz would break you in two. But why do you want to go at all?"

"Because you are going," he said. He spoke scarcely above a whisper, as though to himself.

She looked at him intently, questioningly. Her expression underwent a barely perceptible change, which he did not note because he was not looking at her. It seemed a little less uncompromising. There was the difference between granite and ice—ice is very cold and hard, but it does thaw.

"If you would only tell me what I have done," he insisted—"why you do not like me."

"That, I could not say to you," she replied. "If you were not a fool, you'd know."

He shook his head. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I guess I am; so please tell me because I am such a fool."

"No," she replied emphatically.

"Couldn't you give me a clue?—just a little hint?"

She thought for a moment. "Perhaps I could do that," she said. "You remember that you struck me and carried me away from Basti by force?"

"I did it for your own good, and I apologized," he reminded her.

"But you did it."

"Yes."

"And you didn't do anything about it," she insisted.

"I don't know what you mean," he said hopelessly.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"If I believed that, I might forgive you; but I don't believe anyone can be such a fool."

He sought to find some explanation of the riddle; but though he racked his brains, he could think of none. What could he have done about it?

"Perhaps," said La-ja presently, "neither one of us understands the other. Tell me just exactly why you insist on going to Lo-har with me; and if your reason is what I am beginning to suspect it is, I'll tell you why I have not liked you."

"That's a bet," exclaimed the man. "I want to go to Lo-har because—"

Two bison-men burst into the hut, cutting him short. "Come!" they commanded. "Now Kru is going to have you killed."

THE TWO Ganaks motioned La-ja to accompany them. "Kru has sent for you, too," they said; "but he is not going to kill you," they added, grinning.

As they passed through the village toward the hut of the chief, many of the Ganaks were lying in the shade of the numerous trees that grew within the compound. Some were eating the grass that had been cut by the slaves; others were placidly chewing their cud, drowsing with half-closed eyes. Some of the children played sporadically and briefly, but the adults neither played nor laughed nor conversed. They were typical ruminants, seemingly as stupid. They wore neither ornaments nor clothing, nor had they any weapons.

To their lack of weapons, coupled with their stupidity, von Horst attributed the fact that they had not relieved him of his. He still had his bow and arrows and a knife, though he had not recovered his spear which he had dropped during the fight following his slaying of Drovan.

The prisoners were led before Kru who lay in the shade of the great tree that over-spread his hut, the hut that had been Drovan's so recently. He looked at them through his red-rimmed eyes, but mostly he looked at La-ja. "You belong to me," he said to her; "you belong to the chief. Pretty soon you go in hut; now you stay outside, watch gilak man die. You will see how you die if you make Kru mad." Then he turned to a bull lying beside him. "Splay, go tell the slaves to bring the dancing-water and the death-tree."

"What's the idea?" demanded von Horst. "Why should you kill me? If it hadn't been for me you wouldn't be chief."

"Too many men slaves," grunted Kru. "They eat too much. Dancing water good; death-tree fun."

"Fun for whom—me?"

"No, fun for Ganaks; no fun for gilak."

Presently Splay returned with a number of slaves. Several of the men carried a small tree that had been stripped of its branches; other men and the women bore quantities of small sticks and rude jars and gourds filled with a liquid.

At sight of them the bison-men commenced to gather from all parts of the village; their women came too, but the young were chased away. They sat down forming a great circle about the tree before the chiefs hut. A slave passed a jar to one in the circle. He took a long draught and passed it to the next in line. Thus it started around the circle. The slaves bearing the other gourds and jars followed it around just outside the circle. When

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

it had been emptied another was started at that point.

The men slaves who bore the small tree trunk dug a hole in the ground in an open space between the chiefs hut and the village gate. When the hole was sufficiently deep they set the tree upright in it and tamped dirt around it. It protruded about six feet above the surface of the ground. And while this was going on many gourds and jars had been passed around the circle. Now men and women were bellowing, and presently a woman arose and began to leap and skip in clumsy, awkward simulation of a dance. Soon others joined her, both men and women, until all the adults of the village were leaping and staggering and lurching about the compound.

"Dancing-water," said von Horst to La-ja, with a grin.

"Yes, it is the water that takes men's brains away.

Sometimes it makes brave men of cowards and beasts of brave men and always fools of all men. Gaz drinks much of it before he kills."

"That must be the tree of death over there." Von Horst nodded in the direction of the sapling the slaves had finished setting up. Now they were piling dry grass and leaves and sticks all around it.

"The death tree!" whispered La-ja. "What is it for?"

"For me," said the man.

"But how? I do not understand. It can't be that they are going to—. Oh, no; they can't be."

"But they are, La-ja. Odd, isn't it?"

"What is odd?"

"That these creatures that are so near the beasts couldn't think of such a thing by themselves nor accomplish it. That only man of all the animals has the faculty of devising torture for amusement."

"I had never thought of that," she said; "but it is true, and it is also true that only man makes the drink that steals away his brains and makes him like the beasts."

"Not like the beasts, La-ja—only more human; for it removes his inhibitions and permits him to be himself."

She did not reply, but stood staring at the stake in the center of the compound, fascinated. Von Horst watched her lovely profile, wondering what was passing in that half savage little brain. He knew that the end must be nearing rapidly, but he had made no move to escape the horrible death the slaves were preparing for him. If there had been only himself to consider, he could have made a break for liberty and died fighting; but there was the girl. He wanted to save her far more than he wanted to save himself.

All about them the bison-men were dancing and bellowing. He heard Kru shout, "Fire! Fire! Give us a fire to dance around. More dance-water! Bring more dance-water, slaves!"

As the slaves refilled the jars and gourds, others built a large fire near the stake; and the bellowing herd immediately commenced to circle it. With the lighting of the fire the demeanor of the bison-men became more uncontrolled, more boisterous, and more bestial; and with the added stimulus of the new supply of drink they threw aside all dis-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

cretion.

To right and left they were falling to the ground— those remaining on their feet so drunk that they could scarcely stagger. Then some one raised the cry, “The gilak! To the death-tree with him!”

It was taken up on all sides by those who could still speak, and then Kru came staggering toward von Horst.

“To the death tree with him!” he bellowed. “The girl!” he exclaimed. It was as though he had forgotten her until his eyes fell on her on that minute. “Come with me! You are Kru’s.” He reached out a dirty paw to seize her.

“Not so fast!” said von Horst, stepping between them; then he struck Kru in the face, knocking him down, seized La-ja by the hand and started to run for the village gate, which the slaves had left open when they brought in the tree and the fire-wood. Behind them was the whole herd of bison-men, bellowing with rage as they commenced to get it through their befuddled minds that the prisoners were making a break for escape. In front of them were the slaves. Would they try to stop them? Von Horst dropped Laja’s hand and removed his now useless cartridge belt. Useless? Not quite. A slave tried to stop him, and he swung the loaded belt to the side of his head, knocking him down.

That and one look at von Horst’s face sent the other slaves scurrying out of his way, but now some of the bison-men were taking up the pursuit. However, a single backward glance assured von Horst that either he or La-ja could outdistance them at the moment; as they had difficulty in remaining on their feet at all, while those that did moved about so erratically as to make the idea of pursuit by them appear ridiculous. Nevertheless, they were coming, and the gate was a long way off. To von Horst’s disgust, he saw that a few of the bison-men were steadying. But their vile drink held most of them in a state of helplessness. A few, however, had rallied and formed a definitely menacing group as they followed the two fugitives.

“I’ll give ‘em something to think about besides us,” said von Horst, and as they passed the roaring fire he threw his cartridge belt into it.

As they neared the gate he spoke again to Laja. “Run,” he said. “I’ll try to hold them for a moment or two”; then he wheeled and faced the oncoming bison-men. There were only about a dozen of them sober enough to control their actions or hold to a fixed purpose. The majority of the others were milling about the fire or lying helpless on the ground, and even the dozen were erratic in their movements.

Von Horst loosed an arrow at the nearest of the pursuers. It caught him in the belly, and he went down shrieking and bellowing. A second arrow bowled over another. The remainder were quite close now, too close for comfort. He sent another arrow into a third; and that stopped them, momentarily at least. Then the cartridges in the fire began to explode. At the first detonation those who were pursuing the fugitives turned to see what had caused this startling sound, and simultaneously von Horst wheeled and started for the gate.

He found La-ja standing directly behind him, but she too turned and ran the instant that she saw that he was leaving.

“I thought I told you to run,” he said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"What good would it have done, if you had been recaptured or killed?" she demanded. "They would only have caught me again. But it would have done them no good. Kru would not have had me."

He saw then that she carried her stone knife in her hand, and a lump rose in his throat from pity for her. He wanted to take her in his arms from sympathy, but when one is running from imminent death one cannot very well take a woman who hates one into one's arms.

"But you might have escaped and reached Lohar," he protested.

"There are other things in the world beside reaching Lo-har," she replied enigmatically.

They were past the gates now. Behind them rose the din of exploding cartridges and the mad bellowing of the bison-men. Before them stretched an open, rolling, tree-dotted valley. To their left was the great forest, to their right a fringe of trees at the base of low, wooded cliffs.

Von Horst bore to the right.

"The forest is closer," suggested La-ja.

"It is in the wrong direction," he replied. "Lohar should lie in the direction we are going. It does, doesn't it?"

"Yes, in this general direction."

"But more important is the fact that if we got into the great forest we'd lose ourselves in no time—and no telling where we'd come out."

La-ja glanced back. "I think they're gaining on us," she said. "They are very fast."

Von Horst realized that they'd never reach the cliffs ahead of their pursuers, that their break for liberty had only delayed the inevitable.

"I have a few more arrows left," he said. "We can keep on until they overtake us. Something may happen—a miracle, and it will have to be a miracle. If nothing does, we can make a stand for it. I may be able to kill off enough of them to frighten the others away while we make a fresh start for the cliffs."

"Not a chance," said La-ja. "Look back there near the village."

Von Horst whistled. More warriors were emerging from the gateway. Evidently Kru was sending all who could stand on their feet to join in the pursuit.

"It looks like a hard winter," he remarked.

"Winter?" queried La-ja. "I see nothing but Ganaks. Where is the winter?" She was panting from exertion, and her words came in little gasps.

"Well, let it pass. We'd better save our breath for running."

Thereafter they bent all their energies to the task of outdistancing the bison-men, but without hope. Constantly they lost ground; yet they were nearing the cliffs and the little fringe of wood that half hid them.

Von Horst did not know why he felt so certain that they might be safe if they reached the cliffs; yet he did feel it, and his judgment seemed justified by the fact that the bison-men appeared so anxious to overtake them as quickly as possible. If they had known that the fugitives could not escape even after reaching the cliffs, it seemed reasonable to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

assume that they would have shown less haste and excitement and would have trailed more slowly and with far less exertion.

Presently La-ja stumbled and fell. Von Horst wheeled and was at her side instantly. She seemed very weak as he helped her to her feet.

"It's no use," she said. "I cannot go on. I have been running away from Skruf for a long time, always without sufficient food or rest. It has made me weak. Go on without me. You might easily save yourself. There is nothing more that you can do for me."

"Don't worry," he said. "We'll make our stand here. We'd have had to make it pretty soon anyway."

He turned to glance at the oncoming half-beasts. In a moment they'd be within arrow range. There were nine of them, and he had six arrows left. If he got six of the pursuers he might bluff off the other three, but how about the swarm that was now pouring up the valley from the village?

He was thinking how futile was his foolish little stand against such odds, when something impelled him to turn suddenly and look at La-ja. It was one of those strange, psychic phenomena which most of us have experienced, and which many trained researchers ridicule; yet the force which caused von Horst to turn about seemed almost physical, so powerfully did it affect him and so peremptorily. And as he turned he voiced a cry of alarm and leaped forward, seizing La-ja's right wrist.

"La-ja!" he cried. "Thank the Lord I saw you."

He wrenched her stone knife from her fingers, and then dropped her hand. He had broken out into a cold sweat and was trembling.

"How could you? La-ja, how could you?"

"It is best," she said. "If I were dead you might escape. Soon they will take us; and then we shall both die; for they will kill you, and I will kill myself. I will not let Kru have me."

"No," he said, "that is right; but wait until all hope is gone."

"It is gone. You have already done too much for me. The least I can do is to make you free to save yourself. Give me back my knife."

He shook his head.

"But if they get me, and I have no knife, how can I escape Kru?"

"I'll let you have it," he said, "if you'll promise not to do that until after I am dead. As long as I live there is hope."

"I promise," she said. "I do not want to die. I just wanted to save you."

"Because you hate me?" he asked with a half-smile.

"Perhaps," she replied unsmilingly. "Perhaps I do not want to be under such obligations to one I don't like—or perhaps—"

He handed the knife back to her. "You have promised me," he reminded her.

"I shall keep my promise. Look; they are very close."

He turned then and saw that the bison-men were almost within bow-shot. He fitted an arrow and waited. They saw, and came more slowly. Now they spread out to afford him a poorer target. He had not given them credit for that much sense.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I'll get some of them," he called back to La-ja. "I wish you would run for the cliffs. I think you could make it. I am sure I can hold them for a while."

The girl did not reply and he could not take his eyes from the bison-men long enough even to glance back at her. His bow twanged. A bison-man screamed and fell.

"I'm getting pretty hot at this archery stuff," he commented aloud. This evidence of childish pride upon the very threshold of death amused him, and he smiled. He thought that if he were home he could give exhibitions at town fairs. Perhaps he could even learn to shoot backward through a mirror as he had seen rifle experts do. It was all very amusing. He pictured the embarrassment of his fellow officers and other friends when they saw large colored lithographs announcing the coming of "Lieutenant Frederick Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst, Champion Archer of the World. Admission 25 pfennings."

He loosed another arrow, still smiling. "I think I shall charge more admission," he mused as another bison-man dropped, "I'm pretty good."

La-ja interrupted his amusing train of thought with an exclamation of despair. "A tander is coming, Von," she cried. "It is coming for us. Its tail is up, and it is coming straight for us. It must be an old bull that has gone mad. They are terrible."

Von Horst glanced back. Yes, a mammoth was coming; and it was coming straight as an arrow in their direction. There could be no doubt but that it had seen them and was trotting up to charge. When it got closer it would trumpet, its tail and trunk and ears would all go up; and it would barge down on them like a runaway locomotive. There would be no escaping it. Bison-men in front, a mad mammoth in the rear!

"This doesn't seem to be our lucky day," he said.

"Day?" inquired La-ja. "What is day?"

The bison-men were watching the mammoth. Behind them their fellows were approaching rapidly. Soon there would be fully a hundred of them. Von Horst wondered if they would stand the charge of a mammoth. They bore no arms. How could they defend themselves. Then he glanced back at the mammoth, and his heart leaped. It was quite close now, and it was about to charge. He could see the patch of white hair on its left jowl quite plainly. He voiced the call with which the great beast had been so familiar. Simultaneously the great trunk went up, a thunderous trumpeting shook the earth, and Old White charged.

Von Horst swept La-ja into his arms and stood there in the path of the gigantic monster. Could it be that Old White did not know him, or had he really gone mad and bent on killing, no matter whom, just for the sake of Miling?

The girl clung to the man. He felt her arms about his neck, her firm young breasts pressed against his body, and he was resigned. If it were death, he could not have chosen a happier end—in the arms of the woman he loved.

With a squeal of rage, Old White brushed past them so close that he almost bowled them over and bore down upon the bison-men. These scattered, but they did not run. Then it was that von Horst saw how they fought the mighty tander.

Leaping aside, they sprang in again, goring at the great beast's side and belly as he raced past. They were thrown down by the impact, but they were on their feet again

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

instantly. As a group lured Old White in one direction, fifty Ganaks rushed in upon his sides and rear seeking to reach and tear him with their stout horns.

Perhaps they had overcome other mammoths in this way, for it was evident that they were but following an accustomed routine; but Old White was not as other mammoths. When he had felt a few horns tear his tough sides he ceased charging. He did not let any of them get behind him again. He moved slowly toward them, reminding von Horst of a huge cat stalking a bird. The bison-men waited for the charge, ready to leap aside and then in to gore him; but he did not charge. He came close and then made a short, quick rush, seized a bison-man, raised him high above his head and hurled him with terrific force among his fellows, downing a dozen of them. Before they could collect themselves, Old White was among them, trampling and tossing, until those who managed to elude him were glad to run for their village as fast as they could go.

The mammoth pursued them for a short distance picking up a few stragglers and hurling them far ahead among the frightened, bellowing herd; then he turned about and came at his slow, swinging pace toward von Horst and the girl.

"Now he will kill us!" she cried. "Why didn't we run away while we had the chance?"

"HE WON'T hurt us," von Horst assured her.

"How do you know he won't?" she demanded. "You saw what he did to the Ganaks."

"We are friends, Old White and I."

"This is no time to laugh with words," she said. "It is very brave but it isn't good sense."

The mammoth was nearing them. La-ja involuntarily pressed close to von Horst. He threw a protective arm about her and held her still closer. He was aware that her attitude seemingly belied her repeated assurances of dislike and wondered if fear could so quickly overcome her pride. That did not seem at all like La-ja. He was puzzled, but he was not too insistent upon questioning any circumstance that brought her into his arms. The fact was enough. All that he could do was acknowledge another debt of gratitude to Old White.

The mammoth stopped in front of them. He seemed to be questioning the presence of the girl. Von Horst's only fear was that the great, savage beast might not accept her. He had known but one human friend. All others had been enemies to be killed. The man spoke to him and stroked the trunk that was reaching tentatively toward the girl. Then he gave the command to lift them to his back. There was a moment's hesitation as the sensitive tip moved slowly over La-ja. The girl did not shrink. For that von Horst was thankful. How very brave she was! The trunk encircled them, and again the girl's arms went around the man's neck. Old White tightened his grip. Von Horst repeated the command to lift them, and they were swung from the ground and deposited just behind the great head. At the man's signal, the mammoth moved off in the direction of Lo-har.

La-ja breathed a little sigh that was half gasp. "I do not understand," she said. "How can you make a wild tander do what you tell him to do?"

Von Horst told her then of his first encounter with Old White and of all that had occurred since—his captivity among the mammothmen, of the little canyon, and of his eventual escape.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I saw you attack Frug," she said; "and then Skruf dragged me across the river, and I never knew whether you were killed by Frug or by the mammothmen, or if they captured you.

"Skruf hid with me in a cave beside the river. He put a gag in my mouth so that I couldn't cry out and attract the attention of the mammothmen. We heard them hunting us. I would rather have been captured by them than taken back to Basti, and Skruf knew it. I thought you might be a prisoner among them, too."

She caught herself quickly, as though she had spoken without thought. "Of course I didn't care. It was only that the country of the mammothmen is much nearer Lo-har than Basti is. I did not want to be taken all the way back to Basti.

"We hid for a long time; then we started out again, but at the first sleep I escaped. The thongs he tied me with were so loose that I slipped my hands from them.

"I ran away toward Lo-har. I went a long way and thought that I was safe. I slept many times; so I know I must have come far. I was very lucky. I met only a few of the flesh-eaters and these always when there was a place to hide—a tree or a cave with a very small entrance. I saw no man until once I looked behind me from the top of a low hill and saw Skruf following me. He was a long way off, but I knew him at once. He saw me. It was very plain that he saw me, for he stopped suddenly and stood still for a moment; then he started after me at a trot. I turned and ran. I tried every way that I knew to throw him off my track, and after a long time I thought that I had succeeded. But I had not. He came upon me while I was sleeping, and started to drag me back to Basti. It was then that the bison-men discovered us. You know the rest."

"You have had a hard time of it, La-ja," said von Horst. "I can't understand how you have come through alive."

"I think I have had a very easy time of it," she replied. "Very few girls who are stolen from the tribe ever escape their captors. Many of them are killed; the others have to mate with men they do not like. That I would not do. I would kill myself first. I think I am a very lucky girl."

"But think of all the dangers and hardships you have had to face," he insisted.

"Oh, yes," she admitted, "it is not easy to be alone always with enemies. It is not pleasant, but I have not had so many dangers. The Gorbuses were the worst. I did not like them."

Von Horst was amazed. It seemed incredible that a girl could pass through what she had without being a nervous wreck, yet La-ja appeared to take it all as a matter of course. It was difficult for him not to compare her with girls of his own world and forget how different her environment had been. Where they walked with assurance, she might be as terrified as would they in Pellucidar—though it was not easy to visualize La-ja as terrified under any circumstances.

It often pleased him to dream of taking her back to the outer world with him. There were so many things, commonplace to him, that would astonish her—her first ride on a train, in an automobile, in an airplane; the sight of the great buildings, the giant liners, huge cities. He tried to imagine what the reaction would be of one who had never seen any of these things, nor dreamed of their existence, nor of the civilization that had pro-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

duced them.

She would find many things foolish and impractical—the wearing of high-heeled shoes that pinched her feet; she would think it foolish to wear furs when it was not cold, to dress warmly in the daytime and go half naked at night. All clothes would hamper her; she would not like them. But with the beauty of her face and figure, her pride, and her femininity she would soon learn to like them, of that he was quite certain.

Poor little La-ja! What a crime it would be to let civilization spoil her. However, that was nothing for him to worry about. She would not have him even in Pellucidar, nor was there much likelihood that he would ever himself see the outer world again, much less take her or anyone else back with him.

With reveries such as these and desultory conversation with La-ja he whiled the time while Old White bore them in the direction of Lo-har. Even the larger beasts of prey they encountered on the way turned aside from the path of the great bull mammoth, so that their journey was one of ease, free from the constant menace of these fierce flesh-eaters which would have constantly harassed them had they been on foot.

They had slept three times and eaten not a few when La-ja announced that they were approaching Lo-har. They had halted to rest and sleep—it would be the last sleep before they reached Lohar, and Laja seemed preoccupied and dejected. During this last journey together she had been friendly and companionable, so that von Horst's hopes had risen; though he had had to admit to himself that she still gave him no reason to believe that side which they were camped and upon which great very happy—happier than he had been since he had entered this strange world; perhaps happier than he had ever been, for he had never been in love before.

They had made camp and he had gone out on the plain and brought down a small antelope with an arrow from his bow. Now they were grilling cuts over a small fire. Old White had moved ponderously to a clump of young trees which he was rapidly denuding of foliage. The noonday sun beat down upon the open plain beside which they were camped and upon which great herds grazed peacefully, for the moment undisturbed by any prowling carnivore.

Von Horst felt the peace and contentment that hung over the scene like a white cloud above a summer sea, and his mood was in harmony with his environment. His eyes rested upon La-ja, devouring her; and almost upon his lips was an avowal of the passion that filled his whole being.

She chanced to turn and catch his eyes upon her; for a moment they held; then she looked off across the plain. She pointed.

"When we set out again," she said, "I go in that direction—alone."

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "That is not the direction of Lo-har—it is straight ahead, in the direction we have been travelling."

"A great lake lies to our left," she explained. "We have had to make a detour to pass around it. You cannot see it from here because it lies in a deep basin rimmed by cliffs."

"You are not going alone," he said. "I am going with you."

"Haven't I made it clear to you many times that I do not want you to come with me? How many times must I tell you that I do not like you? Go away and leave me. Let me go

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

back to my own people in peace.”

Von Horst flushed. Bitter words were in his throat, but he choked them. All he said was, “I am going with you, because I—because—well, because you can’t go on alone.”

She rose. “I do not need you, and I do not want you,” she said; then she went and lay down in the shade of a tree to sleep.

Von Horst sat brooding disconsolately. Old White, his meal finished, drank from the stream beside the camp and came and stood beneath a nearby tree, dozing. Von Horst knew that he would remain there and constitute a better guard than any man; so he stretched himself upon the ground and was soon asleep.

When he awoke, Old White was still standing in the shade, his great shaggy body rocking gently to and fro; the herds still grazed over the broad plain; the eternal noon-day sun still shone down serenely upon the peaceful scene. He might have slept for no more than a minute; or, he realized, he might have been sleeping for a week of outer-earthly time. He looked for La-ja. She was not where he had last seen her. A sudden presentiment of evil brought him to his feet. He looked quickly in all directions. The girl was nowhere in sight. He called her name aloud again and again, but there was no response.

Then he went quickly to where she had been sleeping and searched the ground in the vicinity of the camp. There was no sign that either man or beast had been there other than themselves; but this was not entirely strange, as the grass, close cropped by the grazing herds, would have registered no sign of an ordinary passing.

Presently he dismissed the possibility that Laja had been taken forcibly by either beast or man. Had such an attempt been made she would have called to him for help, and surely Old White would have protected the camp from any intruder. There was but one explanation—La-ja had gone on alone, eluding him. She had told him that she did not want him to come with her. His insistence that he would come anyway had left her no alternative other than the thing she had done—she had simply run away from him.

His pride was hurt, but that hurt was as nothing to the ache in his heart. The bottom had dropped out of his world. There seemed nothing in life to look forward to. What was he to do? Where might he go? He had no idea where Sari lay, and only in Sari might he hope to find a friend in all this vast, savage world. But only for a moment was he undecided; then he called to Old White, and at his command the beast swung him to its back. As the mammoth moved off, von Horst guided it in the new direction La-ja had pointed out before they had slept. His mind was made up. He was going to Lo-har. While life remained in him he would not give up hope of winning the girl he loved.

He urged Old White on in the hope of overtaking the girl. Not knowing how long he had slept he had no idea how far ahead of him she might be. She had told him that Lo-har lay but a single march from their last camp site, yet on and on they went until he was half dead with fatigue; and at last Old White refused to go farther without rest, yet there was neither sign of La-ja nor of any village nor even of the great lake that she had told him they must skirt.

He wondered if he were searching in the right direction, for it was easily possible that the village might lie either to the right or left of his line of march; but it seemed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

strange that he should have passed close to any village without seeing some sign of man. Hunting parties were always abroad, and the sight of a stranger would have brought them to investigate and probably to have killed. He banked on his acquaintance with Laja, however, to get him a peaceable hearing from her father, Brun, the chief, when it was his intention to ask to be taken into the tribe.

At last he was forced to halt that Old White might feed and rest; but it was not until they finally did so beside a stream that he realized how much he, too, was in need of both food and sleep. He had brought with him, wrapped in its own hide, some of the antelope he had killed at his last camp; and upon this and some fruit he broke his long fast; then he slept.

He must have slept for a long time, for he was very tired; but with his safety assured by the watchful presence of Old White he slept soundly. When he awoke, something was touching his breast. He did not immediately open his eyes, for he recognized the feel of the moist tip of Old White's trunk upon his naked flesh. He just lay there luxuriating in the sensuous delight of the brief, lazy moments that lie between awakening and full consciousness. But as consciousness returned, bringing command of all the senses, he gradually became aware of an odor that was not the odor of Old White. It was a strong, acrid scent; and slowly he raised his lids.

A sudden numbness seized him as he recognized the creature that stood over him sniffing at his body with its moist muzzle moving over his bare flesh. It was that most gigantic and feared of all Pellucidarian beasts of prey, the ryth, a colossal cave bear long extinct upon the outer crust.

He closed his eyes again and feigned death, for he had heard that a bear will not maul a dead body unless it is its own kill. He had little belief in the truth of the statement, but it was the proverbial straw and the only one. All that he could do was lie still and hope for the best.

The nose left his body. There was no sound but the breathing of the beast. What was it doing? The suspense was maddening, and at last he could endure it no longer. The bear was standing over him with its head turned to one side, looking away, sniffing, listening. Von Horst lay in a gentle depression beneath a widespreading tree. He could see but a short distance in the direction the bear was looking. Nor could the bear see farther than the summit of the gentle slope that ran down to the bank of the stream beside which von Horst lay, but it must have scented or heard something approaching.

Von Horst thought that it must be Old White returning. He must have wandered much farther from camp than usual. There would be a battle royal when he returned and saw the ryth menacing his friend. The man knew that Old White was afraid of nothing, and he knew the reputation of the mighty cave bear for fearlessness and bellicosity. He had been told that one of these great beasts could kill a mammoth with a single blow of its mighty paw; but Old White was not just a mammoth; he was the mammoth. The mammothmen had said there was never one like him for size and ferocity and cunning. And then a man topped the rise and walked in full view of the bear and von Horst. He was quartering down the slope so that he was not facing them directly; and he had not yet seen them, for they were in the dense shade of the tree.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

He was half way down the slope, and von Horst thought the bear was going to let him pass, when he saw them. Simultaneously von Horst recognized him. It was Daj, the young warrior from Lo-har whom he had met in the little canyon in Ja-ru, the land of the mammothmen.

When Daj saw the bear he looked for the nearest tree. It was man's only defense against such a creature. As he started to run, the bear voiced a deafening roar and started for him. Von Horst sprang to his feet. He was saved, for he could clamber into the tree above now before the bear could turn and reach him. But what of Daj? The tree nearest him was evidently a little too far away to be reached before the bear overtook him, yet Daj was straining every muscle to reach it.

As von Horst had risen he had gathered up his bow and arrows that had lain on the ground beside him. In them he saw a possibility of saving Daj. Fitting an arrow to his bow he took aim and let drive. The missile sank deep in the bear's rump eliciting a roar of rage and pain and bringing it around with an alacrity and agility that belied its great bulk as it sought the temerarious creature that dared assault it; and upon the instant, without a pause, it charged von Horst.

He had saved Daj; but perhaps he had underestimated the safety of his own position, for he had not reckoned with the surprising agility and speed of the enormous rylth.

The instant that he had loosed the first arrow he had fitted another to his bow which he bent now until the point of the arrow rested upon his thumb, and when he loosed it he drooped his weapon and sprang for a tree branch directly above him.

He did not know if he had scored a hit or not. The bear did not pause, but came thundering down upon him. He felt the wind of its raking talons against his legs as he drew them to the safety of the tree. A deep sigh of relief registered acknowledgment of his escape from a seemingly hopeless situation.

When he looked down he saw the bear standing beneath him pawing at the feathered shaft that protruded from the left side of its chest. It was roaring, but not so strongly now; and blood was flowing from its mouth. Von Horst saw that his last shot had delivered a serious wound, though perhaps not fatal. Those mighty, prehistoric creatures were most tenacious of life.

The bear pawed viciously at the shaft and then sprawled forward, struggled spasmodically, and lay still. Von Horst guessed that it had driven or twisted the arrow into its own heart, but he did not venture down at once. He looked for Daj but could not see him, as much foliage intervened; then he called his name aloud.

"Who are you?" came the answer.

"The mammothmen called me Von; we met in the little canyon. Now do you recall me?"

"Yes. Because of you I escaped death that day. I could not very well forget you. What has happened to the bear? It is lying down. It looks as though it were dead, but what could have killed it?"

"Wait until I make sure that it's dead," cautioned von Horst. "If it is, we'll come down."

With his stone knife he hacked a branch from the tree and threw it down upon the bear. As the beast gave no sign that it had felt it, von Horst was satisfied that it was dead,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and slipped down to the ground.

As he was retrieving his weapons Daj approached him, a friendly smile upon his face. "Now you have saved my life again," he said. "I do not know why, because we are not of the same tribe."

"We are of the same race," said von Horst; "we are both gilaks."

The Pellucidarian shrugged. "If everyone felt that way there would be too many gilaks in Pellucidar and all the game would soon be killed off."

Von Horst smiled as he thought of the vast area of the inner world with its handful of inhabitants and of the teeming city slums of the outer crust.

"For the good of the gilaks of Pellucidar," he said, "may you never be persuaded to the brotherhood of man."

"I do not know what you are talking about," admitted Daj; "but what I would like to know is what made the ryth die."

Von Horst showed him the bloody arrows that he had withdrawn from the carcass. "The one in his chest killed him," he said. "It punctured his heart."

"Those little slivers of wood killed a ryth!" exclaimed Daj.

"There was a lot of luck mixed in with them," admitted von Horst; "but if you get one of them into the heart of anything, it will kill."

"Yes, but how did you get it in? You couldn't go close enough to a ryth to stick it in without being killed, and they're too light to throw in as you might a spear."

Von Horst showed Daj his bow and explained its use, and the Pellucidarian was much interested. After he had examined it for a moment he handed it back.

"We'd better move away from here," he said. "That ryth was down here on the plain hunting. His mate may be around somewhere. If he doesn't show up she'll follow his scent until she finds him. This will not be a good place to be."

"Where are you going?" asked von Horst.

"To Lo-har," replied Daj. "I have been many sleeps on the way from Ja-ru, but now I shall be there in three or four more sleeps."

"Three or four?" demanded von Horst. "I thought I was very close to Lo-har."

"No," said Daj, "but where are you going?"

"To Lo-har," replied von Horst.

"Why?"

"I have no other place to go. I am from another world to which I cannot possibly return. I know one person in Sari who would be my friend, but I cannot find my way to Sari. In Lo-har I know two people who should not dislike me. I am going there to ask Bran to make me a member of the tribe."

"Whom do you know in Lo-har?" asked Daj.

"You and La-ja," replied von Horst.

Daj scratched his head. "Brun will probably have you killed," he said. "If he doesn't, Gaz will kill you; but if you want to go to Lo-har, I will take you. You might as well die there as anywhere."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

THREE LONG MARCHES in the direction from which he had just come brought von Horst and Daj to the camp site at which La-ja had deserted the former and convinced him that the girl had deliberately set him upon the wrong trail. The realization of this fact, coupled with the desertion of Old White, disheartened him to such an extent that he seriously considered abandoning his evidently futile pursuit of La-ja; but when Daj was ready to set out after they had slept, von Horst accompanied him; though it only added to his depression when he found that the route toward Lo-har was that which he and La-ja had been following up until the moment that she had sent him off in the wrong direction.

One long march brought them to a sandstone canyon and the cliff-dwellings of Lo-har, where Daj was received with more show of enthusiasm and affection than von Horst had previously seen exhibited by the humans of Pellucidar. But of von Horst they were wary and suspicious, appraising him with hostile eyes while Daj explained innumerable times that the stranger was a friend who had liberated him from captivity and twice saved his life.

"What does he want in Lo-har?" demanded the sentry who had first halted them at a safe distance from the village, and the question was constantly repeated by others as they advanced.

In reply Daj explained that von Horst was a great warrior from another world who wished to come and live in Lo-har, joining the tribe; and all the while, paying no attention to the muttering and grumbling about him, von Horst searched for La-ja with eager eyes.

"Where is Brun?" demanded Daj. "He will decide whether or not the stranger remains."

"Brun is not here," replied a warrior.

"Where is he?"

"Perhaps he is dead. Many sleeps have passed since he went away to search for La-ja, his daughter."

"Then who is acting chief now?" asked Daj.

"Gaz," replied the other.

Daj appeared puzzled. "He was chosen by the warriors?" he asked.

The other shook his head. "No; he took the power, threatening to kill any who interfered. Gaz is a mighty man. No one has as yet disputed his right, though many would do so if they were not afraid, for we are not happy under Gaz."

"Where is he?" Daj's eyes were wandering about the village.

"He was gone after La-ja."

Von Horst was instantly alert and attentive. "Where has she gone?" he asked.

Both the warrior and Daj looked at him questioning, for Daj knew nothing of von Horst's love for Laja. "Why do you want to know, stranger?" demanded the warrior suspiciously.

"If I know where the woman has gone, I shall be able to find the man."

Daj and the warrior nodded. "That is right," said the former, and then he asked a question that von Horst had wished to ask but had not dared. "Why has Gaz gone after La-ja? She has been missing for many sleeps, and her father has already gone after her."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

If Gaz were going after her, why didn't he go before this?"

"You do not understand," said the warrior. "Laja returned a few sleeps ago, and Gaz claimed her as his mate; but she would have nothing to do with him. When he would have taken her to his cave by force, she eluded him and ran away."

"And Gaz?" asked von Horst.

"He followed her. Doubtless before this he has caught her and she is his mate. It is well for a girl, especially a chiefs daughter, to show spirit. Gaz will like her better for it. Those who are too easy to get are not liked for so long a time as the others. Perhaps La-ja only ran away out of sight of the village and then waited for Gaz. Many a girl has done this."

"Which way did she go?" demanded von Horst again. His voice was hoarse and dead in his throat.

"If you know what is well for you you will not interfere with Gaz now but wait until he returns. He will be bad enough then. If I were you, stranger, I'd get as far away from Lo-har as I could before Gaz comes back."

"Which way did he go?" repeated von Horst.

The warrior shook his head. "That way," he said, pointing up the canyon. "Beyond the divide at the head of the canyon is a beautiful valley. It is such a place as a man might take his woman—or a woman lure her man."

Von Horst shuddered; then without a word he set off toward the head of the canyon and the beautiful valley to which a woman might lure her man.

The warrior and Daj stood looking after him. The latter shook his head. "It is too bad," he said; "he is a great warrior and a good friend."

The warrior shrugged. "What difference does it make?" he asked. "Gaz will only kill him a little sooner; that is all."

As von Horst clambered the steep ascent at the head of the canyon his mind was a turmoil of hopes and fears and passion—of love and hate. The last vestige of centuries of civilization had fallen away, leaving him a stark cave man of the stone age. As some primitive ancestor of the outer crust may have done eons before, he sought his rival with murder in his heart. As for the woman he desired, he would take her now whether she wished it or not.

Beyond the summit he looked down into the most beautiful valley he had ever seen, but he gave it scarcely a glance. What his eyes sought was something far more beautiful. He sought for some sign of the direction in which the two had gone as he dropped down toward the floor of the valley, and at last he found it in a well marked game trail that wound beside a little stream that meandered down toward a larger river that he could faintly distinguish in the haze of the distance. Here was an occasional print of a tiny sandaled foot and often overlapping them those of a large foot that could have belonged only to a huge man.

Von Horst started along the trail at a trot. He wanted to call the girl's name aloud; but he knew that she would not reply even though she heard him, for had she not made it plain that a love such as his could arouse no corresponding emotion. He wondered vaguely what had become of his pride, that he could pursue a woman who hated him and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

have it in his heart to take her by force against her will. He thought that he should be ashamed of himself, but he was not. For a while he was puzzled; and then he realized that he had changed—that he was not the same man who had entered the inner world God only knew how long ago. Environment had metamorphosed him—savage Pellucidar had claimed him as her own.

The very thought of Gaz raised him to a fury. He realized that he had been hating the man for longer than he knew. He had no fear of him, as he had no fear of death. Perhaps it was the latter that kept him from fearing Gaz, for from all that he had heard of the man Gaz spelled death.

At a steady trot he pushed on. How far ahead they were he had no way of knowing. How much of truth or falsity there was in the insinuations of the warrior who had set him on the trail he could not even guess—the very thought of them made him frantic, the thought that he might be too late; but what was even worse was the haunting fear that Laja had come willing and waited. She had told him that it was her duty to mate with a mighty warrior, and why not Gaz? Von Horst groaned aloud and quickened his pace. If ever a man suffered the tortures of the damned, it was he.

He came upon a place where the trail branched, a smaller, less worn trail running off at right angles toward the stream that lay to his right. After a moment's careful inspection he determined that the two he sought had taken the smaller trail, and in the mud of both river banks at the crossing he again found the spoor, this time well defined. From there the trail ran directly into the mouth of a small side canyon, and afterward he had only to follow the floor of the canyon upward. Presently he heard a commotion ahead and the hoarse voice of a man shouting. He could not distinguish the words. The voice came from beyond a bend in the canyon which hid the speaker from his sight.

From now on he should have gone cautiously, but he did not. Instead he pushed on even faster, taking no precautions; and thus he came suddenly upon Gaz and La-ja. The latter was clinging precariously to a tiny ledge upon the face of a lofty escarpment. Her feet rested upon this narrow support, her body was flattened against the face of the cliff, her arms were outspread, her palms pressed tightly against the hard stone. Gaz, unable to scale the cliff, stood on the ground below shouting orders for La-ja to descend to him. At sight of the two and their positions that so eloquently told a story, von Horst breathed a sigh of relief—he had not been too late!

Suddenly Gaz picked up a rock and hurled it at Laja. "Come down!" he roared, "or I'll knock you down." The rock struck the face of the cliff close beside Laja's head. Gaz stooped to take up another.

Von Horst shouted at him, and the man wheeled in surprise. The man from the outer crust reached over his shoulder for an arrow to fit to his bow. He had no compunctions whatsoever about shooting down a man armed only with a crude spear and a stone knife. To his astonishment, he found that his quiver was empty.

Where could his arrows have gone? He was sure he had had them when he entered the village. Then he recalled how the natives had pulled and hauled him around, milling and pressing against him. It must have been then that someone had taken his arrows.

Gaz was coming toward him belligerently. "Who are you?" he demanded. "What do

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

you want here?"

"I have come for you, Gaz," replied von Horst. "I have come to kill you and take the girl for myself."

Gaz roared and came on. He thought it a huge joke that any warrior should challenge his supremacy. Laja turned her head far enough so that she could look down. What were her feelings when she recognized von Horst, as she must have done immediately? Who may know? As a matter of fact she gave no indication that she even saw him; but once, a moment later, when he glanced away from Gaz momentarily, von Horst saw that the girl was descending. What her intentions he could not even guess. She might be going to help the man of her choice in the impending battle, or she might be going to take advantage of the preoccupation of the two men to run away again.

"Who are you?" demanded Gaz. "I never saw you before."

"I am von Horst, and La-ja is my woman," growled the other.

"Do you know who I am?"

"You're the man I've crossed a world to kill," replied von Horst. "You're Gaz."

"Go away!" shouted La-ja. "Go away before Gaz kills you. I won't have you—not if you killed a thousand Gazes would I have you. Run! Run while you can."

Von Horst looked at Gaz. He was a monster-man, an enormous, bearded fellow who might have weighed well over three hundred pounds; and he was as gross and repulsive and brutal in appearance as he was large. His snaggle teeth were bared in a snarl as he charged von Horst. The latter had no fear. He had met warriors of the stone age before. They had no skill; and the hairy, massive bodies of some of them suggested strength far greater than they possessed. Von Horst had discovered that he was stronger than any he had met. They had had only an advantage in weight, nor was that always an advantage, as it lessened their agility.

Von Horst's patience with La-ja was at an end. He wanted to be done with Gaz as quickly as possible so that he could take the girl in hand. He even contemplated giving her a sound beating. He thought that she deserved it. He was thinking in terms of the stone age.

As Gaz charged down upon him, von Horst struck him a heavy blow in the face, as he stepped aside out of the path of the huge body. Gaz staggered and let out a bellow of rage, and as he turned to rush von Horst again he drew his stone knife from his G string. He, too, wished to end the duel at once; for he was crazed with chagrin that this smaller man had defied him and had done the first damage in the fight—all in the presence of the woman he had chosen to be his mate. Much more of the same and he would be the laughing stock of the village.

Von Horst saw the weapon in Gaz's hand and drew his own. This time he waited, and Gaz came in more slowly. When he was quite near von Horst, he leaped in, swinging a terrific knife blow at his antagonist's chest. Von Horst parried with his left arm, plunged his blade into Gaz's side, and leaped away; but as he did so his foot struck a stone protruding above the ground, and he went down. Instantly Gaz was on top of him, hurling his great carcass full upon the body of his fallen antagonist. One great paw reached for von Horst's throat, the other drove the stone blade down toward his heart.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The European caught the other's wrist, stopping the descending knife; but with his other hand Gaz was choking the life from him, and at the same time he was trying to wrench his knife hand free and plunge the weapon into von Horst's heart. As von Horst had fallen he had dropped his own knife. Now, while he held Gaz's weapon from him he groped for his own on the ground about him. Occasionally he relinquished his search to strike Gaz a heavy blow in the face, which always caused him to loosen his hold upon the other's throat, giving von Horst an opportunity to gulp in a mouthful of fresh air; but the man from the outer world realized that he was weakening rapidly and that unless he found his knife the end would come quickly.

He had struck Gaz again heavily, and when he reached down again to grope for his weapon his hand contacted it immediately, as though someone had placed it in his grasp. He did not pause then to seek an explanation; in fact the only thing that mattered was that he possessed the knife.

He saw Gaz glance back and heard him curse; then he drove his blade deep into the left side of the caveman. Gaz screamed and, releasing his hold on von Horst's throat, sought to seize his knife arm; but the other eluded him, and again and again the stone knife was driven into his bleeding side.

Then Gaz tried to get up and away from von Horst, but the latter seized his beard and held him. Relentlessly he struck again and again. Gaz's roars and screams diminished. His body commenced to slump; then, with a final shudder, it collapsed upon the victor.

Von Horst pushed it aside and rose. Panting, blood-covered, he looked about for the woman— his woman now. He saw her standing there nearby wide-eyed, incredulous. She came slowly toward him. "You have killed Gaz!" she said in an awed whisper.

"And what of it?" he demanded.

"I didn't think you could do it. I thought that he would kill you."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," he snapped. "I wonder if you realize what it means."

"I am not disappointed," she said. "And what does it mean?"

"It means that I am going to take you. You are mine. Do you understand? You are mine!"

A slow smile broke like sunlight through the clouds of doubt.

"I have been yours almost from the first," she said, "but you were too stupid to realize it."

"What?" he ejaculated. "What do you mean? You have done nothing but repulse me and try to drive me away from you. When I slept, you ran off and left me after directing me on the wrong trail."

"Yes," she answered, "I did all those things. I did them because I loved you. I knew that if I told you I returned your love you would follow me to Lo-har, and I thought that if you came here you would be killed. How could I guess that you could kill Gaz, whom no man has ever before been able to kill?"

"La-ja!" he whispered, and took her in his arms.

Together they returned to the village of Lo-har. The warriors and the women clustered about them. "Where is Gaz?" they asked.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Gaz is dead," said La-ja.

"Then we have no chief."

"Here is your chief," replied the girl, laying a hand upon von Horst's shoulder.

Some of the warriors laughed, others grumbled. "He is a stranger. What has he done that he should be chief?"

"When Brun went away, you let Gaz be chief because you were afraid of him. You hated him; and he was a poor chief, but none of you was brave enough to try to kill him. Von killed Gaz in a fair fight with knives, and he has taken the daughter of your chief as mate. Until Brun returns what warrior among you is better qualified to be chief than Von? If any thinks differently let him step forward and fight Von with his bare hands."

And so Lieutenant Frederick Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst became chief of the cliff-dwellers of Lo-har. He was a wise chief, for he combined with the psychology of the cave man, that he had acquired, all the valuable knowledge of another environment. He became almost a god to them, so that they no longer regretted the loss of Brun.

And then, after a while, came rumors of a strange people that were reported to have come up out of the south. They had weapons against which neither man nor beast could stand—weapons that made a great noise and vomited smoke and killed at a distance.

When von Horst heard these rumors he thrilled with excitement. Such men could only be members of the company that had come from the outer crust in the giant dirigible O-220—his friends. Doubtless they were searching for him. He called his warriors to him. "I am going out to meet these strangers of whom we have heard rumors. I think they are my friends. But if they are not my friends, they will be able to kill many of us with the weapons they have before we can get near enough to kill them. How many of you wish to go with me?"

They all volunteered, but he took only about fifty warriors. La-ja accompanied them, and when they set out they had only the vaguest of rumors to guide them. But as they went south and talked with men of other tribes, whom they captured along the way, the reports became more definite; and then at last von Horst's scouts came back from the front and reported that they had seen a body of men camped by a river a short distance away.

Led by von Horst, the cavemen of Lo-har crept close to the camp of the strangers. Here von Horst saw armed men who bore rifles and bandoleers of cartridges. The arrangement and discipline of the camp, the sentries, the military air assured him that these people had had contact with civilization. But he was still too far away to recognize faces if there were any there that he knew. But of one thing he was confident—this was no party from the O-220.

He whispered to his warriors for a moment; then he rose alone and walked slowly down toward the camp. He had taken but a few steps in the open before a sentry discovered him and gave the alarm. Von Horst saw men rise all about the camp and look toward him. He raised both hands above his head as a sign that he came in peace. No one spoke as he crossed the open ground to the very edge of the camp; then a man ran forward with glad cry.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Von!"

It was a moment before von Horst recognized who it was that spoke his name. It was Dangar, and behind Dangar were Thorek, Lotai, and Murnal. Von Horst was astounded. How had these come together? Who were the armed men?

Presently a tall, fine looking man came forward. "You are Lieutenant von Horst?" he asked.

"Yes; and you?"

"David Innes. When the O-220 returned to the outer crust and Jason Gridley decided to go back with it, he made me promise that I would equip an expedition and make a thorough search for you. I did so immediately I returned to Sari. I had no luck until some of my men met Dangar returning to Sari after a long absence. He guided us to The Forest of Death. Once we had passed through that we had no idea in what direction to search until we came upon Thorek, Lotai, and Murnal escaping from the land of the mammothmen.

"They told us that they believed that you had escaped, and they thought you might be searching for Lo-har. We had never heard of Lo-har, but we succeeded in taking a prisoner who knew the direction in which the country lay. Later we came upon a man named Skruf whom you had wounded with an arrow. We promised him protection and he directed us to the village of the bison-men. Now we were nearing Lo-har, but still it was difficult to find. These people only knew the general direction in which it lay. Our one hope was to capture a Lo-harian. This we did before the last sleep. He is with us now and guiding us much against his will toward his own country, for he thinks we will turn upon him and his people."

"Who is he?" asked von Horst.

"Bran, the chief of the Loharians," replied Innes.

Von Horst signalled for his tribesmen to come in to the camp, and asked that Brun be brought. Innes sent for him, telling him that some of his own people had come to meet him. But when Brun came and saw von Horst he drew himself up very proudly and turned his back.

"I do not know this man," he said. "He is not of Lohar."

"Look at those who are coming, Brun," suggested von Horst. "You will know them all, especially La-ja."

"La-ja!" exclaimed the chief. "I had given her up for dead. I have searched a world for her."

The men of Lo-har camped with the men of Sari in friendship, and there was much palaver, and a great deal of food was eaten, and they slept twice in that one camp before they spoke of breaking it.

"You will come back to Sari with us, Lieutenant?" asked Innes. "Gridley may come back on another expedition at any time now; it may be your only chance to return to the outer crust."

Von Horst glanced at a little, yellow haired cave-girl gnawing on a bone.

"I am not at all sure that I care to return to the outer crust," he said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I am forced to admit that even though I had traveled a long distance to place Bowen Tyler's manuscript in the hands of his father, I was still a trifle skeptical as to its sincerity, since I could not but recall that it had not been many years since Bowen had been one of the most notorious practical jokers of his alma mater. The truth was that as I sat in the Tyler library at Santa Monica I commenced to feel a trifle foolish and to wish that I had merely forwarded the manuscript by express instead of bearing it personally, for I confess that I do not enjoy being laughed at. I have a well-developed sense of humor—when the joke is not on me.

Mr. Tyler, Sr., was expected almost hourly. The last steamer in from Honolulu had brought information of the date of the expected sailing of his yacht *Toreador*, which was now twenty-four hours overdue. Mr. Tyler's assistant secretary, who had been left at home, assured me that there was no doubt but that the *Toreador* had sailed as promised, since he knew his employer well enough to be positive that nothing short of an act of God would prevent his doing what he had planned to do. I was also aware of the fact that the sending apparatus of the *Toreador's* wireless equipment was sealed, and that it would only be used in event of dire necessity. There was, therefore, nothing to do but wait, and we waited.

We discussed the manuscript and hazarded guesses concerning it and the strange events it narrated. The torpedoing of the liner upon which Bowen

J. Tyler, Jr., had taken passage for France to join the American Ambulance was a well-known fact, and I had further substantiated by wire to the New York office of the owners, that a Miss La Rue had been booked for passage. Further, neither she nor Bowen had been mentioned among the list of survivors; nor had the body of either of them been recovered.

Their rescue by the English tug was entirely probable; the capture of the enemy U-33 by the tug's crew was not beyond the range of possibility; and their adventures during the perilous cruise which the treachery and deceit of Benson extended until they found themselves in the waters of the far South Pacific with depleted stores and poisoned water-casks, while bordering upon the fantastic, appeared logical enough as narrated, event by event, in the manuscript.

Caprona has always been considered a more or less mythical land, though it is vouched for by an eminent navigator of the eighteenth century; but Bowen's narrative made it seem very real, however many miles of trackless ocean lay between us and it. Yes, the narrative had us guessing. We were agreed that it was most improbable; but neither of us could say that anything which it contained was beyond the range of possibility. The weird flora and fauna of Caspak were as possible under the thick, warm atmospheric conditions of the superheated crater as they were in the Mesozoic era under almost exactly similar conditions, which were then probably worldwide. The assistant secretary had heard of Caproni and his discoveries, but admitted that he never had taken much stock in the one nor the other. We were agreed that the one statement most difficult of explanation was that which reported the entire absence of human young among the various tribes which Tyler had had intercourse. This was the one irreconcilable statement of the manuscript. A world of adults! It was impossible.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

We speculated upon the probable fate of Bradley and his party of English sailors. Tyler had found the graves of two of them; how many more might have perished! And Miss La Rue—could a young girl long have survived the horrors of Caspak after having been separated from all of her own kind? The assistant secretary wondered if Nobs still was with her, and then we both smiled at this tacit acceptance of the truth of the whole uncanny tale:

"I suppose I'm a fool," remarked the assistant secretary; "but by George, I can't help believing it, and I can see that girl now, with the big Airedale at her side protecting her from the terrors of a million years ago. I can visualize the entire scene—the apelike Grimaldi men huddled in their filthy caves; the huge pterodactyls soaring through the heavy air upon their bat-like wings; the mighty dinosaurs moving their clumsy hulks beneath the dark shadows of preglacial forests—the dragons which we considered myths until science taught us that they were the true recollections of the first man, handed down through countless ages by word of mouth from father to son out of the unrecorded dawn of humanity."

"It is stupendous—if true," I replied. "And to think that possibly they are still there—Tyler and Miss La Rue—surrounded by hideous dangers, and that possibly Bradley still lives, and some of his party! I can't help hoping all the time that Bowen and the girl have found the others; the last Bowen knew of them, there were six left, all told—the mate Bradley, the engineer Olson, and Wilson, Whitely, Brady and Sinclair. There might be some hope for them if they could join forces; but separated, I'm afraid they couldn't last long."

"If only they hadn't let the German prisoners capture the U-33! Bowen should have had better judgment than to have trusted them at all. The chances are von Schoenvorts succeeded in getting safely back to Kiel and is strutting around with an Iron Cross this very minute. With a large supply of oil from the wells they discovered in Caspak, with plenty of water and ample provisions, there is no reason why they couldn't have negotiated the submerged tunnel beneath the barrier cliffs and made good their escape."

"I don't like 'em," said the assistant secretary; "but sometimes you got to hand it to 'em."

"Yes," I growled, "and there's nothing I'd enjoy more than handing it to them!" And then the telephone-bell rang.

The assistant secretary answered, and as I watched him, I saw his jaw drop and his face go white. "My God!" he exclaimed as he hung up the receiver as one in a trance. "It can't be!"

"What?" I asked.

"Mr. Tyler is dead," he answered in a dull voice. "He died at sea, suddenly, yesterday."

The next ten days were occupied in burying Mr. Bowen J. Tyler, Sr., and arranging plans for the succor of his son. Mr. Tom Billings, the late Mr. Tyler's secretary, did it all. He is force, energy, initiative and good judgment combined and personified. I never have beheld a more dynamic young man. He handled lawyers, courts and executors as a sculptor handles his modeling clay. He formed, fashioned and forced them to his will.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

He had been a classmate of Bowen Tyler at college, and a fraternity brother, and before, that he had been an impoverished and improvident cowpuncher on one of the great Tyler ranches. Tyler, Sr., had picked him out of thousands of employees and made him; or rather Tyler had given him the opportunity, and then Billings had made himself. Tyler, Jr., as good a judge of men as his father, had taken him into his friendship, and between the two of them they had turned out a man who would have died for a Tyler as quickly as he would have for his flag.

Yet there was none of the sycophant or fawner in Billings; ordinarily I do not wax enthusiastic about men, but this man Billings comes as close to my conception of what a regular man should be as any I have ever met. I venture to say that before Bowen J. Tyler sent him to college he had never heard the word ethics, and yet I am equally sure that in all his life he never has transgressed a single tenet of the code of ethics of an American gentleman.

Ten days after they brought Mr. Tyler's body off the Toreador, we steamed out into the Pacific in search of Caprona. There were forty in the party, including the master and crew of the Toreador; and Billings the indomitable was in command. We had a long and uninteresting search for Caprona, for the old map upon which the assistant secretary had finally located it was most inaccurate. When its grim walls finally rose out of the ocean's mists before us, we were so far south that it was a question as to whether we were in the South Pacific or the Antarctic. Bergs were numerous, and it was very cold.

All during the trip Billings had steadfastly evaded questions as to how we were to enter Caspak after we had found Caprona. Bowen Tyler's manuscript had made it perfectly evident to all that the subterranean outlet of the Caspakian River was the only means of ingress or egress to the crater world beyond the impregnable cliffs. Tyler's party had been able to navigate this channel because their craft had been a submarine; but the Toreador could as easily have flown over the cliffs as sailed under them. Jimmy Hollis and Colin Short whiled away many an hour inventing schemes for surmounting the obstacle presented by the barrier cliffs, and making ridiculous wagers as to which one Tom Billings had in mind; but immediately we were all assured that we had raised Caprona, Billings called us together.

"There was no use in talking about these things," he said, "until we found the island. At best it can be but conjecture on our part until we have been able to scrutinize the coast closely. Each of us has formed a mental picture of the Capronian seacoast from Bowen's manuscript, and it is not likely that any two of these pictures resemble each other, or that any of them resemble the coast as we shall presently find it. I have in view three plans for scaling the cliffs, and the means for carrying out each is in the hold. There is an electric drill with plenty of waterproof cable to reach from the ship's dynamos to the cliff-top when the Toreador is anchored at a safe distance from shore, and there is sufficient half-inch iron rod to build a ladder from the base to the top of the cliff. It would be a long, arduous and dangerous work to bore the holes and insert the rungs of the ladder from the bottom upward; yet it can be done.

"I also have a lifesaving mortar with which we might be able to throw a line over the summit of the cliffs; but this plan would necessitate one of us climbing to the top with the chances more than even that the line would cut at the summit, or the hooks at the upper

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

end would slip.

"My third plan seems to me the most feasible. You all saw a number of large, heavy boxes lowered into the hold before we sailed. I know you did, because you asked me what they contained and commented upon the large letter 'H' which was painted upon each box. These boxes contain the various parts of a hydroaeroplane. I purpose assembling this upon the strip of beach described in Bowen's manuscript—the beach where he found the dead body of the apelike man—provided there is sufficient space above high water; otherwise we shall have to assemble it on deck and lower it over the side. After it is assembled, I shall carry tackle and ropes to the cliff-top, and then it will be comparatively simple to hoist the search-party and its supplies in safety. Or I can make a sufficient number of trips to land the entire party in the valley beyond the barrier; all will depend, of course, upon what my first reconnaissance reveals."

That afternoon we steamed slowly along the face of Caprona's towering barrier.

"You see now," remarked Billings as we craned our necks to scan the summit thousands of feet above us, "how futile it would have been to waste our time in working out details of a plan to surmount those." And he jerked his thumb toward the cliffs. "It would take weeks, possibly months, to construct a ladder to the top. I had no conception of their formidable height. Our mortar would not carry a line halfway to the crest of the lowest point. There is no use discussing any plan other than the hydro-aeroplane. We'll find the beach and get busy."

Late the following morning the lookout announced that he could discern surf about a mile ahead; and as we approached, we all saw the line of breakers broken by a long sweep of rolling surf upon a narrow beach. The launch was lowered, and five of us made a landing, getting a good ducking in the ice-cold waters in the doing of it; but we were rewarded by the finding of the clean-picked bones of what might have been the skeleton of a high order of ape or a very low order of man, lying close to the base of the cliff. Billings was satisfied, as were the rest of us, that this was the beach mentioned by Bowen, and we further found that there was ample room to assemble the seaplane.

Billings, having arrived at a decision, lost no time in acting, with the result that before mid-afternoon we had landed all the large boxes marked "H" upon the beach, and were busily engaged in opening them. Two days later the plane was assembled and tuned. We loaded tackles and ropes, water, food and ammunition in it, and then we each implored Billings to let us be the one to accompany him. But he would take no one. That was Billings; if there was any especially difficult or dangerous work to be done, that one man could do, Billings always did it himself. If he needed assistance, he never called for volunteers—just selected the man or men he considered best qualified for the duty. He said that he considered the principles underlying all volunteer service fundamentally wrong, and that it seemed to him that calling for volunteers reflected upon the courage and loyalty of the entire command.

We rolled the plane down to the water's edge, and Billings mounted the pilot's seat. There was a moment's delay as he assured himself that he had everything necessary. Jimmy Hollis went over his armament and ammunition to see that nothing had been omitted. Besides pistol and rifle, there was the machine-gun mounted in front of him on the plane, and ammunition for all three. Bowen's account of the terrors of Caspak had im-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

pressed us all with the necessity for proper means of defense.

At last all was ready. The motor was started, and we pushed the plane out into the surf. A moment later, and she was skimming seaward. Gently she rose from the surface of the water, executed a wide spiral as she mounted rapidly, circled once far above us and then disappeared over the crest of the cliffs. We all stood silent and expectant, our eyes glued upon the towering summit above us. Hollis, who was now in command, consulted his wristwatch at frequent intervals.

"Gad," exclaimed Short, "we ought to be hearing from him pretty soon!"

Hollis laughed nervously. "He's been gone only ten minutes," he announced.

"Seems like an hour," snapped Short. "What's that? Did you hear that? He's firing! It's the machine-gun!"

"Oh, Lord; and here we are as helpless as a lot of old ladies ten thousand miles away! We can't do a thing. We don't know what's happening. Why didn't he let one of us go with him?"

Yes, it was the machine-gun. We would hear it distinctly for at least a minute. Then came silence. That was two weeks ago. We have had no sign nor signal from Tom Billings since.

I'll never forget my first impressions of Caspak as I circled in, high over the surrounding cliffs. From the plane I looked down through a mist upon the blurred landscape beneath me. The hot, humid atmosphere of Caspak condenses as it is fanned by the cold Antarctic air-currents which sweep across the crater's top, sending a tenuous ribbon of vapor far out across the Pacific. Through this the picture gave one the suggestion of a colossal impressionistic canvas in greens and browns and scarlets and yellows surrounding the deep blue of the inland sea—just blobs of color taking form through the tumbling mist.

I dived close to the cliffs and skirted them for several miles without finding the least indication of a suitable landing-place; and then I swung back at a lower level, looking for a clearing close to the bottom of the mighty escarpment; but I could find none of sufficient area to insure safety. I was flying pretty low by this time, not only looking for landing places but watching the myriad life beneath me. I was down pretty well toward the south end of the island, where an arm of the lake reaches far inland, and I could see the surface of the water literally black with creatures of some sort. I was too far up to recognize individuals, but the general impression was of a vast army of amphibious monsters. The land was almost equally alive with crawling, leaping, running, flying things. It was one of the latter which nearly did for me while my attention was fixed upon the weird scene below.

The first intimation I had of it was the sudden blotting out of the sunlight from above, and as I glanced quickly up, I saw a most terrific creature swooping down upon me. It must have been fully eighty feet long from the end of its long, hideous beak to the tip of its thick, short tail, with an equal spread of wings. It was coming straight for me and hissing frightfully—I could hear it above the whirl of the propeller. It was coming straight down toward the muzzle of the machine-gun and I let it have it right in the breast; but still it came for me, so that I had to dive and turn, though I was dangerously close to earth.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The thing didn't miss me by a dozen feet, and when I rose, it wheeled and followed me, but only to the cooler air close to the level of the cliff-tops; there it turned again and dropped. Something—man's natural love of battle and the chase, I presume—impelled me to pursue it, and so I too circled and dived. The moment I came down into the warm atmosphere of Caspak, the creature came for me again, rising above me so that it might swoop down upon me. Nothing could better have suited my armament, since my machine-gun was pointed upward at an angle of about degrees and could not be either depressed or elevated by the pilot. If I had brought someone along with me, we could have raked the great reptile from almost any position, but as the creature's mode of attack was always from above, he always found me ready with a hail of bullets. The battle must have lasted a minute or more before the thing suddenly turned completely over in the air and fell to the ground.

Bowen and I roomed together at college, and I learned a lot from him outside my regular course. He was a pretty good scholar despite his love of fun, and his particular hobby was paleontology. He used to tell me about the various forms of animal and vegetable life which had covered the globe during former eras, and so I was pretty well acquainted with the fishes, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals of Paleolithic times. I knew that the thing that had attacked me was some sort of pterodactyl which should have been extinct millions of years ago. It was all that I needed to realize that Bowen had exaggerated nothing in his manuscript.

Having disposed of my first foe, I set myself once more to search for a landing-place near to the base of the cliffs beyond which my party awaited me. I knew how anxious they would be for word from me, and I was equally anxious to relieve their minds and also to get them and our supplies well within Caspak, so that we might set off about our business of finding and rescuing Bowen Tyler; but the pterodactyl's carcass had scarcely fallen before I was surrounded by at least a dozen of the hideous things, some large, some small, but all bent upon my destruction. I could not cope with them all, and so I rose rapidly from among them to the cooler strata wherein they dared not follow; and then I recalled that Bowen's narrative distinctly indicated that the farther north one traveled in Caspak, the fewer were the terrible reptiles which rendered human life impossible at the southern end of the island.

There seemed nothing now but to search out a more northerly landing-place and then return to the Toreador and transport my companions, two by two, over the cliffs and deposit them at the rendezvous. As I flew north, the temptation to explore overcame me. I knew that I could easily cover Caspak and return to the beach with less petrol than I had in my tanks; and there was the hope, too, that I might find Bowen or some of his party. The broad expanse of the inland sea lured me out over its waters, and as I crossed, I saw at either extremity of the great body of water an island—one to the south and one to the north; but I did not alter my course to examine either closely, leaving that to a later time.

The further shore of the sea revealed a much narrower strip of land between the cliffs and the water than upon the western side; but it was a hillier and more open country. There were splendid landing-places, and in the distance, toward the north, I thought I descried a village; but of that I was not positive. However, as I approached the land, I saw a number of human figures apparently pursuing one who fled across a broad ex-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

panse of meadow. As I dropped lower to have a better look at these people, they caught the whirring of my propellers and looked aloft. They paused an instant—pursuers and pursued; and then they broke and raced for the shelter of the nearest wood. Almost instantaneously a huge bulk swooped down upon me, and as I looked up, I realized that there were flying reptiles even in this part of Caspak. The creature dived for my right wing so quickly that nothing but a sheer drop could have saved me. I was already close to the ground, so that my maneuver was extremely dangerous; but I was in a fair way of making it successfully when I saw that I was too closely approaching a large tree. My effort to dodge the tree and the pterodactyl at the same time resulted disastrously. One wing touched an upper branch; the plane tipped and swung around, and then, out of control, dashed into the branches of the tree, where it came to rest, battered and torn, forty feet above the ground.

Hissing loudly, the huge reptile swept close above the tree in which my plane had lodged, circled twice over me and then flapped away toward the south. As I guessed then and was to learn later, forests are the surest sanctuary from these hideous creatures, which, with their enormous spread of wing and their great weight, are as much out of place among trees as is a seaplane.

For a minute or so I clung there to my battered flyer, now useless beyond redemption, my brain numbed by the frightful catastrophe that had befallen me. All my plans for the succor of Bowen and Miss La Rue had depended upon this craft, and in a few brief minutes my own selfish love of adventure had wrecked their hopes and mine. And what effect it might have upon the future of the balance of the rescuing expedition I could not even guess. Their lives, too, might be sacrificed to my suicidal foolishness. That I was doomed seemed inevitable; but I can honestly say that the fate of my friends concerned me more greatly than did my own.

Beyond the barrier cliffs my party was even now nervously awaiting my return. Presently apprehension and fear would claim them—and they would never know! They would attempt to scale the cliffs—of that I was sure; but I was not so positive that they would succeed; and after a while they would turn back, what there were left of them, and go sadly and mournfully upon their return journey to home. Home! I set my jaws and tried to forget the word, for I knew that I should never again see home.

And what of Bowen and his girl? I had doomed them too. They would never even know that an attempt had been made to rescue them. If they still lived, they might some day come upon the ruined remnants of this great plane hanging in its lofty sepulcher and hazard vain guesses and be filled with wonder; but they would never know; and I could not but be glad that they would not know that Tom Billings had sealed their death-war-rants by his criminal selfishness.

All these useless regrets were getting me in a bad way; but at last I shook myself and tried to put such things out of my mind and take hold of conditions as they existed and do my level best to wrest victory from defeat. I was badly shaken up and bruised, but considered myself mighty lucky to escape with my life. The plane hung at a precarious angle, so that it was with difficulty and considerable danger that I climbed from it into the tree and then to the ground.

My predicament was grave. Between me and my friends lay an inland sea fully sixty

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

miles wide at this point and an estimated land-distance of some three hundred miles around the northern end of the sea, through such hideous dangers as I am perfectly free to admit had me pretty well buffaloeed. I had seen quite enough of Caspak this day to assure me that Bowen had in no way exaggerated its perils. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to believe that he had become so accustomed to them before he started upon his manuscript that he rather slighted them. As I stood there beneath that tree—a tree which should have been part of a coal-bed countless ages since—and looked out across a sea teeming with frightful life—life which should have been fossil before God conceived of Adam—I would not have given a minim of stale beer for my chances of ever seeing my friends or the outside world again; yet then and there I swore to fight my way as far through this hideous land as circumstances would permit. I had plenty of ammunition, an automatic pistol and a heavy rifle—the latter one of twenty added to our equipment on the strength of Bowen's description of the huge beasts of prey which ravaged Caspak. My greatest danger lay in the hideous reptilia whose low nervous organizations permitted their carnivorous instincts to function for several minutes after they had ceased to live.

But to these things I gave less thought than to the sudden frustration of all our plans. With the bitterest of thoughts I condemned myself for the foolish weakness that had permitted me to be drawn from the main object of my flight into premature and useless exploration. It seemed to me then that I must be totally eliminated from further search for Bowen, since, as I estimated it, the three hundred miles of Caspakian territory I must traverse to reach the base of the cliffs beyond which my party awaited me were practically impassable for a single individual unaccustomed to Caspakian life and ignorant of all that lay before him. Yet I could not give up hope entirely. My duty lay clear before me; I must follow it while life remained to me, and so I set forth toward the north.

The country through which I took my way was as lovely as it was unusual—I had almost said unearthly, for the plants, the trees, the blooms were not of the earth that I knew. They were larger, the colors more brilliant and the shapes startling, some almost to grotesqueness, though even such added to the charm and romance of the landscape as the giant cacti render weirdly beautiful the waste spots of the sad Mojave. And over all the sun shone huge and round and red, a monster sun above a monstrous world, its light dispersed by the humid air of Caspak—the warm, moist air which lies sluggish upon the breast of this great mother of life, Nature's mightiest incubator.

All about me, in every direction, was life. It moved through the treetops and among the boles; it displayed itself in widening and intermingling circles upon the bosom of the sea; it leaped from the depths; I could hear it in a dense wood at my right, the murmur of it rising and falling in ceaseless volumes of sound, riven at intervals by a horrid scream or a thunderous roar which shook the earth; and always I was haunted by that inexplicable sensation that unseen eyes were watching me, that soundless feet dogged my trail. I am neither nervous nor high-strung; but the burden of responsibility upon me weighed heavily, so that I was more cautious than is my wont. I turned often to right and left and rear lest I be surprised, and I carried my rifle at the ready in my hand. Once I could have sworn that among the many creatures dimly perceived amidst the shadows of the wood I saw a human figure dart from one cover to another, but I could not be sure.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

For the most part I skirted the wood, making occasional detours rather than enter those forbidding depths of gloom, though many times I was forced to pass through arms of the forest which extended to the very shore of the inland sea. There was so sinister a suggestion in the uncouth sounds and the vague glimpses of moving things within the forest, of the menace of strange beasts and possibly still stranger men, that I always breathed more freely when I had passed once more into open country.

I had traveled northward for perhaps an hour, still haunted by the conviction that I was being stalked by some creature which kept always hidden among the trees and shrubbery to my right and a little to my rear, when for the hundredth time I was attracted by a sound from that direction, and turning, saw some animal running rapidly through the forest toward me. There was no longer any effort on its part at concealment; it came on through the underbrush swiftly, and I was confident that whatever it was, it had finally gathered the courage to charge me boldly. Before it finally broke into plain view, I became aware that it was not alone, for a few yards in its rear a second thing thrashed through the leafy jungle. Evidently I was to be attacked in force by a pair of hunting beasts or men.

And then through the last clump of waving ferns broke the figure of the foremost creature, which came leaping toward me on light feet as I stood with my rifle to my shoulder covering the point at which I had expected it would emerge. I must have looked foolish indeed if my surprise and consternation were in any way reflected upon my countenance as I lowered my rifle and gazed incredulous at the lithe figure of the girl speeding swiftly in my direction. But I did not have long to stand thus with lowered weapon, for as she came, I saw her cast an affrighted glance over her shoulder, and at the same moment there broke from the jungle at the same spot at which I had seen her, the hugest cat I had ever looked upon.

At first I took the beast for a saber-tooth tiger, as it was quite the most fearsome-appearing beast one could imagine; but it was not that dread monster of the past, though quite formidable enough to satisfy the most fastidious thrill-hunter. On it came, grim and terrible, its baleful eyes glaring above its distended jaws, its lips curled in a frightful snarl which exposed a whole mouthful of formidable teeth. At sight of me it had abandoned its impetuous rush and was now sneaking slowly toward us; while the girl, a long knife in her hand, took her stand bravely at my left and a little to my rear. She had called something to me in a strange tongue as she raced toward me, and now she spoke again; but what she said I could not then, of course, know—only that her tones were sweet, well modulated and free from any suggestion of panic.

Facing the huge cat, which I now saw was an enormous panther, I waited until I could place a shot where I felt it would do the most good, for at best a frontal shot at any of the large carnivora is a ticklish matter. I had some advantage in that the beast was not charging; its head was held low and its back exposed; and so at forty yards I took careful aim at its spine at the junction of neck and shoulders. But at the same instant, as though sensing my intention, the great creature lifted its head and leaped forward in full charge. To fire at that sloping forehead I knew would be worse than useless, and so I quickly shifted my aim and pulled the trigger, hoping against hope that the soft-nosed bullet and the heavy charge of powder would have sufficient stopping effect to give me time to place a

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

second shot.

In answer to the report of the rifle I had the satisfaction of seeing the brute spring into the air, turning a complete somersault; but it was up again almost instantly, though in the brief second that it took it to scramble to its feet and get its bearings, it exposed its left side fully toward me, and a second bullet went crashing through its heart. Down it went for the second time—and then up and at me. The vitality of these creatures of Caspak is one of the marvelous features of this strange world and bespeaks the low nervous organization of the old Paleolithic life which has been so long extinct in other portions of the world.

I put a third bullet into the beast at three paces, and then I thought that I was done for; but it rolled over and stopped at my feet, stone dead. I found that my second bullet had torn its heart almost completely away, and yet it had lived to charge ferociously upon me, and but for my third shot would doubtless have slain me before it finally expired—or as Bowen Tyler so quaintly puts it, before it knew that it was dead.

With the panther quite evidently conscious of the fact that dissolution had overtaken it, I turned toward the girl, who was regarding me with evident admiration and not a little awe, though I must admit that my rifle claimed quite as much of her attention as did I. She was quite the most wonderful animal that I have ever looked upon, and what few of her charms her apparel hid, it quite effectively succeeded in accentuating. A bit of soft, undressed leather was caught over her left shoulder and beneath her right breast, falling upon her left side to her hip and upon the right to a metal band which encircled her leg above the knee and to which the lowest point of the hide was attached. About her waist was a loose leather belt, to the center of which was attached the scabbard belonging to her knife. There was a single armlet between her right shoulder and elbow, and a series of them covered her left forearm from elbow to wrist. These, I learned later, answered the purpose of a shield against knife attack when the left arm is raised in guard across the breast or face.

Her masses of heavy hair were held in place by a broad metal band which bore a large triangular ornament directly in the center of her forehead. This ornament appeared to be a huge turquoise, while the metal of all her ornaments was beaten, virgin gold, inlaid in intricate design with bits of mother-of-pearl and tiny pieces of stone of various colors. From the left shoulder depended a leopard's tail, while her feet were shod with sturdy little sandals. The knife was her only weapon. Its blade was of iron, the grip was wound with hide and protected by a guard of three out-bowing strips of flat iron, and upon the top of the hilt was a knob of gold.

I took in much of this in the few seconds during which we stood facing each other, and I also observed another salient feature of her appearance: she was frightfully dirty! Her face and limbs and garment were streaked with mud and perspiration, and yet even so, I felt that I had never looked upon so perfect and beautiful a creature as she. Her figure beggars description, and equally so, her face. Were I one of these writer-fellows, I should probably say that her features were Grecian, but being neither a writer nor a poet I can do her greater justice by saying that she combined all of the finest lines that one sees in the typical American girl's face rather than the pronounced sheep-like physiognomy of the Greek goddess. No, even the dirt couldn't hide that fact; she was beautiful

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

beyond compare.

As we stood looking at each other, a slow smile came to her face, parting her symmetrical lips and disclosing a row of strong white teeth.

“Galu?” she asked with rising inflection.

And remembering that I read in Bowen’s manuscript that Galu seemed to indicate a higher type of man, I answered by pointing to myself and repeating the word. Then she started off on a regular catechism, if I could judge by her inflection, for I certainly understood no word of what she said. All the time the girl kept glancing toward the forest, and at last she touched my arm and pointed in that direction.

Turning, I saw a hairy figure of a manlike thing standing watching us, and presently another and another emerged from the jungle and joined the leader until there must have been at least twenty of them. They were entirely naked. Their bodies were covered with hair, and though they stood upon their feet without touching their hands to the ground, they had a very apelike appearance, since they stooped forward and had very long arms and quite apish features. They were not pretty to look upon with their close-set eyes, flat noses, long up

per lips and protruding yellow fangs.

“Alus!” said the girl.

I had reread Bowen’s adventures so often that I knew them almost by heart, and so now I knew that I was looking upon the last remnant of that ancient man-race—the Alus of a forgotten period—the speechless man of antiquity.

“Kazor!” cried the girl, and at the same moment the Alus came jabbering toward us. They made strange growling, barking noises, as with much baring of fangs they advanced upon us. They were armed only with nature’s weapons—powerful muscles and giant fangs; yet I knew that these were quite sufficient to overcome us had we nothing better to offer in defense, and so I drew my pistol and fired at the leader. He dropped like a stone, and the others turned and fled. Once again the girl smiled her slow smile and stepping closer, caressed the barrel of my automatic. As she did so, her fingers came in contact with mine, and a sudden thrill ran through me, which I attributed to the fact that it had been so long since I had seen a woman of any sort or kind.

She said something to me in her low, liquid tones; but I could not understand her, and then she pointed toward the north and started away. I followed her, for my way was north too; but had it been south I still should have followed, so hungry was I for human companionship in this world of beasts and reptiles and half-men.

We walked along, the girl talking a great deal and seeming mystified that I could not understand her. Her silvery laugh rang merrily when I in turn essayed to speak to her, as though my language was the quaintest thing she ever had heard. Often after fruitless attempts to make me understand she would hold her palm toward me, saying, “Galu!” and then touch my breast or arm and cry, “Alu, alu!” I knew what she meant, for I had learned from Bowen’s narrative the negative gesture and the two words which she repeated. She meant that I was no Galu, as I claimed, but an Alu, or speechless one. Yet every time she said this she laughed again, and so infectious were her tones that I could only join her. It was only natural, too, that she should be mystified by my inability to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

comprehend her or to make her comprehend me, for from the club-men, the lowest human type in Caspak to have speech, to the golden race of Galus, the tongues of the various tribes are identical—except for amplifications in the rising scale of evolution. She, who is a Galu, can understand one of the Bo-lu and make herself understood to him, or to a hatchet-man, a spearman or an archer. The Ho-lus, or apes, the Alus and myself were the only creatures of human semblance with which she could hold no converse; yet it was evident that her intelligence told her that I was neither Ho-lu nor Alu, neither anthropoid ape nor speechless man.

Yet she did not despair, but set out to teach me her language; and had it not been that I worried so greatly over the fate of Bowen and my companions of the Toreador, I could have wished the period of instruction prolonged.

I never have been what one might call a ladies' man, though I like their company immensely, and during my college days and since have made various friends among the sex. I think that I rather appeal to a certain type of girl for the reason that I never make love to them; I leave that to the numerous others who do it infinitely better than I could hope to, and take my pleasure out of girls' society in what seem to be more rational ways—dancing, golfing, boating, riding, tennis, and the like. Yet in the company of this half-naked little savage I found a new pleasure that was entirely distinct from any that I ever had experienced. When she touched me, I thrilled as I had never before thrilled in contact with another woman. I could not quite understand it, for I am sufficiently sophisticated to know that this is a symptom of love and I certainly did not love this filthy little barbarian with her broken, unkempt nails and her skin so besmeared with mud and the green of crushed foliage that it was difficult to say what color it originally had been. But if she was outwardly uncouth, her clear eyes and strong white, even teeth, her silvery laugh and her queenly carriage, bespoke an innate fineness which dirt could not quite successfully conceal.

The sun was low in the heavens when we came upon a little river which emptied into a large bay at the foot of low cliffs. Our journey so far had been beset with constant danger, as is every journey in this frightful land. I have not bored you with a recital of the wearying successions of attacks by the multitude of creatures which were constantly crossing our path or deliberately stalking us. We were always upon the alert; for here, to paraphrase, eternal vigilance is indeed the price of life.

I had managed to progress a little in the acquisition of a knowledge of her tongue, so that I knew many of the animals and reptiles by their Caspakian names, and trees and ferns and grasses. I knew the words for sea and river and cliff, for sky and sun and cloud. Yes, I was getting along finely, and then it occurred to me that I didn't know my companion's name; so I pointed to myself and said, "Tom," and to her and raised my eyebrows in interrogation. The girl ran her fingers into that mass of hair and looked puzzled. I repeated the action a dozen times.

"Tom," she said finally in that clear, sweet, liquid voice. "Tom!"

I had never thought much of my name before; but when she spoke it, it sounded to me for the first time in my life like a mighty nice name, and then she brightened suddenly and tapped her own breast and said: "Ajo!"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Ayor!" I repeated, and she laughed and struck her palms together.

Well, we knew each other's names now, and that was some satisfaction. I rather liked hers—Ayor! And she seemed to like mine, for she repeated it.

We came to the cliffs beside the little river where it empties into the bay with the great inland sea beyond. The cliffs were weather-worn and rotted, and in one place a deep hollow ran back beneath the overhanging stone for several feet, suggesting shelter for the night. There were loose rocks strewn all about with which I might build a barricade across the entrance to the cave, and so I halted there and pointed out the place to Ayor, trying to make her understand that we would spend the night there.

As soon as she grasped my meaning, she assented with the Caspakian equivalent of an affirmative nod, and then touching my rifle, motioned me to follow her to the river. At the bank she paused, removed her belt and dagger, dropping them to the ground at her side; then unfastening the lower edge of her garment from the metal leg-band to which it was attached, slipped it off her left shoulder and let it drop to the ground around her feet. It was done so naturally, so simply and so quickly that it left me gasping like a fish out of water. Turning, she flashed a smile at me and then dived into the river, and there she bathed while I stood guard over her. For five or ten minutes she splashed about, and when she emerged her glistening skin was smooth and white and beautiful. Without means of drying herself, she simply ignored what to me would have seemed a necessity, and in a moment was arrayed in her simple though effective costume.

It was now within an hour of darkness, and as I was nearly famished, I led the way back about a quarter of a mile to a low meadow where we had seen antelope and small horses a short time before. Here I brought down a young buck, the report of my rifle sending the balance of the herd scampering for the woods, where they were met by a chorus of hideous roars as the carnivora took advantage of their panic and leaped among them.

With my hunting-knife I removed a hindquarter, and then we returned to camp. Here I gathered a great quantity of wood from fallen trees, Ayor helping me; but before I built a fire, I also gathered sufficient loose rock to build my barricade against the frightful terrors of the night to come.

I shall never forget the expression upon Ayor's face as she saw me strike a match and light the kindling beneath our campfire. It was such an expression as might transform a mortal face with awe as its owner beheld the mysterious workings of divinity. It was evident that Ayor was quite unfamiliar with modern methods of fire-making. She had thought my rifle and pistol wonderful; but these tiny slivers of wood which from a magic rub brought flame to the camp hearth were indeed miracles to her.

As the meat roasted above the fire, Ayor and I tried once again to talk; but though copiously filled with incentive, gestures and sounds, the conversation did not flourish notably. And then Ayor took up in earnest the task of teaching me her language. She commenced, as I later learned, with the simplest form of speech known to Caspak or for that matter to the world—that employed by the Bo-lu. I found it far from difficult, and even though it was a great handicap upon my instructor that she could not speak my language, she did remarkably well and demonstrated that she possessed ingenuity and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

intelligence of a high order.

After we had eaten, I added to the pile of firewood so that I could replenish the fire before the entrance to our barricade, believing this as good a protection against the carnivora as we could have; and then Ajor and I sat down before it, and the lesson proceeded, while from all about us came the weird and awesome noises of the Caspakian night—the moaning and the coughing and roaring of the tigers, the panthers and the lions, the barking and the dismal howling of a wolf, jackal and hyaenadon, the shrill shrieks of stricken prey and the hissing of the great reptiles; the voice of man alone was silent.

But though the voice of this choir-terrible rose and fell from far and near in all directions, reaching at times such a tremendous volume of sound that the earth shook to it, yet so engrossed was I in my lesson and in my teacher that often I was deaf to what at another time would have filled me with awe. The face and voice of the beautiful girl who leaned so eagerly toward me as she tried to explain the meaning of some word or correct my pronunciation of another quite entirely occupied my every faculty of perception. The firelight shone upon her animated features and sparkling eyes; it accentuated the graceful motions of her gesturing arms and hands; it sparkled from her white teeth and from her golden ornaments, and glistened on the smooth firmness of her perfect skin. I am afraid that often I was more occupied with admiration of this beautiful animal than with a desire for knowledge; but be that as it may, I nevertheless learned much that evening, though part of what I learned had naught to do with any new language.

Ajor seemed determined that I should speak Caspakian as quickly as possible, and I thought I saw in her desire a little of that all-feminine trait which has come down through all the ages from the first lady of the world—curiosity. Ajor desired that I should speak her tongue in order that she might satisfy a curiosity concerning me that was filling her to a point where she was in danger of bursting; of that I was positive. She was a regular little animated question-mark. She bubbled over with interrogations which were never to be satisfied unless I learned to speak her tongue. Her eyes sparkled with excitement; her hand flew in expressive gestures; her little tongue raced with time; yet all to no avail. I could say man and tree and cliff and lion and a number of other words in perfect Caspakian; but such a vocabulary was only tantalizing; it did not lend itself well to a very general conversation, and the result was that Ajor would wax so wroth that she would clench her little fists and beat me on the breast as hard as ever she could, and then she would sink back laughing as the humor of the situation captured her.

She was trying to teach me some verbs by going through the actions herself as she repeated the proper word. We were very much engrossed—so much so that we were giving no heed to what went on beyond our cave—when Ajor stopped very suddenly, crying: “Kazor!” Now she had been trying to teach me that ju meant stop; so when she cried kazor and at the same time stopped, I thought for a moment that this was part of my lesson—for the moment I forgot that kazor means beware. I therefore repeated the word after her; but when I saw the expression in her eyes as they were directed past me and saw her point toward the entrance to the cave, I turned quickly—to see a hideous face at the small aperture leading out into the night. It was the fierce and snarling countenance of a gigantic bear. I have hunted silvertips in the White Mountains of Arizona and thought

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

them quite the largest and most formidable of big game; but from the appearance of the head of this awful creature I judged that the largest grizzly I had ever seen would shrink by comparison to the dimensions of a Newfoundland dog.

Our fire was just within the cave, the smoke rising through the apertures between the rocks that I had piled in such a way that they arched inward toward the cliff at the top. The opening by means of which we were to reach the outside was barricaded with a few large fragments which did not by any means close it entirely; but through the apertures thus left no large animal could gain ingress. I had depended most, however, upon our fire, feeling that none of the dangerous nocturnal beasts of prey would venture close to the flames. In this, however, I was quite evidently in error, for the great bear stood with his nose not a foot from the blaze, which was now low, owing to the fact that I had been so occupied with my lesson and my teacher that I had neglected to replenish it.

Ajor whipped out her futile little knife and pointed to my rifle. At the same time she spoke in a quite level voice entirely devoid of nervousness or any evidence of fear or panic. I knew she was exhorting me to fire upon the beast; but this I did not wish to do other than as a last resort, for I was quite sure that even my heavy bullets would not more than further enrage him—in which case he might easily force an entrance to our cave.

Instead of firing, I piled some more wood upon the fire, and as the smoke and blaze arose in the beast's face, it backed away, growling most frightfully; but I still could see two ugly points of light blazing in the outer darkness and hear its growls rumbling terrifically without. For some time the creature stood there watching the entrance to our frail sanctuary while I racked my brains in futile endeavor to plan some method of defense or escape. I knew full well that should the bear make a determined effort to get at us, the rocks I had piled as a barrier would come tumbling down about his giant shoulders like a house of cards, and that he would walk directly in upon us.

Ajor, having less knowledge of the effectiveness of firearms than I, and therefore greater confidence in them, entreated me to shoot the beast; but I knew that the chance that I could stop it with a single shot was most remote, while that I should but infuriate it was real and present; and so I waited for what seemed an eternity, watching those devilish points of fire glaring balefully at us, and listening to the ever-increasing volume of those seismic growls which seemed to rumble upward from the bowels of the earth, shaking the very cliffs beneath which we cowered, until at last I saw that the brute was again approaching the aperture. It availed me nothing that I piled the blaze high with firewood, until Ajor and I were near to roasting; on came that mighty engine of destruction until once again the hideous face yawned its fanged yawn directly within the barrier's opening. It stood thus a moment, and then the head was withdrawn. breathed a sigh of relief, the thing had altered its intention and was going on in search of other and more easily procurable prey; the fire had been too much for it.

But my joy was short-lived, and my heart sank once again as a moment later I saw a mighty paw insinuated into the opening—a paw as large around as a large dishpan. Very gently the paw toyed with the great rock that partly closed the entrance, pushed and pulled upon it and then very deliberately drew it outward and to one side. Again came the head, and this time much farther into the cavern; but still the great shoulders would not pass through the opening. Ajor moved closer to me until her shoulder touched my

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

side, and I thought I felt a slight tremor run through her body, but otherwise she gave no indication of fear. Involuntarily I threw my left arm about her and drew her to me for an instant. It was an act of reassurance rather than a caress, though I must admit that again and even in the face of death I thrilled at the contact with her; and then I released her and threw my rifle to my shoulder, for at last I had reached the conclusion that nothing more could be gained by waiting. My only hope was to get as many shots into the creature as I could before it was upon me. Already it had torn away a second rock and was in the very act of forcing its huge bulk through the opening it had now made.

So now I took careful aim between its eyes; my right fingers closed firmly and evenly upon the small of the stock, drawing back my trigger-finger by the muscular action of the hand. The bullet could not fail to hit its mark! I held my breath lest I swerve the muzzle a hair by my breathing. I was as steady and cool as I ever had been upon a target-range, and I had the full consciousness of a perfect hit in anticipation; I knew that I could not miss. And then, as the bear surged forward toward me, the hammer fell—futilely, upon an imperfect cartridge.

Almost simultaneously I heard from without a perfectly hellish roar; the bear gave voice to a series of growls far transcending in volume and ferocity anything that he had yet essayed and at the same time backed quickly from the cave. For an instant I couldn't understand what had happened to cause this sudden retreat when his prey was practically within his clutches. The idea that the harmless clicking of the hammer had frightened him was too ridiculous to entertain. However, we had not long to wait before we could at least guess at the cause of the diversion, for from without came mingled growls and roars and the sound of great bodies thrashing about until the earth shook. The bear had been attacked in the rear by some other mighty beast, and the two were now locked in a titanic struggle for supremacy. With brief respites, during which we could hear the labored breathing of the contestants, the battle continued for the better part of an hour until the sounds of combat grew gradually less and finally ceased entirely.

At Ajor's suggestion, made by signs and a few of the words we knew in common, I moved the fire directly to the entrance to the cave so that a beast would have to pass directly through the flames to reach us, and then we sat and waited for the victor of the battle to come and claim his reward; but though we sat for a long time with our eyes glued to the opening, we saw no sign of any beast.

At last I signed to Ajor to lie down, for I knew that she must have sleep, and I sat on guard until nearly morning, when the girl awoke and insisted that I take some rest; nor would she be denied, but dragged me down as she laughingly menaced me with her knife.

When I awoke, it was daylight, and I found Ajor squatting before a fine bed of coals roasting a large piece of antelope-meat. Believe me, the sight of the new day and the delicious odor of the cooking meat filled me with renewed happiness and hope that had been all but expunged by the experience of the previous night; and perhaps the slender figure of the bright-faced girl proved also a potent restorative. She looked up and smiled at me, showing those perfect teeth, and dimpling with evident happiness—the most adorable picture that I had ever seen. I recall that it was then I first regretted that she was only a little untutored savage and so far beneath me in the scale of evolution.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Her first act was to beckon me to follow her outside, and there she pointed to the explanation of our rescue from the bear—a huge saber-tooth tiger, its fine coat and its flesh torn to ribbons, lying dead a few paces from our cave, and beside it, equally mangled, and disemboweled, was the carcass of a huge cave-bear. To have had one's life saved by a saber-tooth tiger, and in the twentieth century into the bargain, was an experience that was to say the least unique; but it had happened—I had the proof of it before my eyes.

So enormous are the great carnivora of Caspak that they must feed perpetually to support their giant thews, and the result is that they will eat the meat of any other creature and will attack anything that comes within their ken, no matter how formidable the quarry. From later observation—I mention this as worthy the attention of paleontologists and naturalists—I came to the conclusion that such creatures as the cave-bear, the cave-lion and the saber-tooth tiger, as well as the larger carnivorous reptiles make, ordinarily, two kills a day—one in the morning and one after night. They immediately devour the entire carcass, after which they lie up and sleep for a few hours. Fortunately their numbers are comparatively few; otherwise there would be no other life within Caspak. It is their very voracity that keeps their numbers down to a point which permits other forms of life to persist, for even in the season of love the great males often turn upon their own mates and devour them, while both males and females occasionally devour their young. How the human and semihuman races have managed to survive during all the countless ages that these conditions must have existed here is quite beyond me.

After breakfast Ajor and I set out once more upon our northward journey. We had gone but a little distance when we were attacked by a number of apelike creatures armed with clubs. They seemed a little higher in the scale than the Alus. Ajor told me they were Bo-lu, or clubmen. A revolver-shot killed one and scattered the others; but several times later during the day we were menaced by them, until we had left their country and entered that of the Sto-lu, or hatchet-men. These people were less hairy and more manlike; nor did they appear so anxious to destroy us. Rather they were curious, and followed us for some distance examining us most closely. They called out to us, and Ajor answered them; but her replies did not seem to satisfy them, for they gradually became threatening, and I think they were preparing to attack us when a small deer that had been hiding in some low brush suddenly broke cover and dashed across our front. We needed meat, for it was near one o'clock and I was getting hungry; so I drew my pistol and with a single shot dropped the creature in its tracks. The effect upon the Bo-lu was electrical. Immediately they abandoned all thoughts of war, and turning, scampered for the forest which fringed our path.

That night we spent beside a little stream in the Sto-lu country. We found a tiny cave in the rock bank, so hidden away that only chance could direct a beast of prey to it, and after we had eaten of the deer-meat and some fruit which Ajor gathered, we crawled into the little hole, and with sticks and stones which I had gathered for the purpose I erected a strong barricade inside the entrance. Nothing could reach us without swimming and wading through the stream, and I felt quite secure from attack. Our quarters were rather cramped. The ceiling was so low that we could not stand up, and the floor so narrow that it was with difficulty that we both wedged into it together; but we were very tired, and so

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

we made the most of it; and so great was the feeling of security that I am sure I fell asleep as soon as I had stretched myself beside Ajor.

During the three days which followed, our progress was exasperatingly slow. I doubt if we made ten miles in the entire three days. The country was hideously savage, so that we were forced to spend hours at a time in hiding from one or another of the great beasts which menaced us continually. There were fewer reptiles; but the quantity of carnivora seemed to have increased, and the reptiles that we did see were perfectly gigantic. I shall never forget one enormous specimen which we came upon browsing upon water-reeds at the edge of the great sea. It stood well over twelve feet high at the rump, its highest point, and with its enormously long tail and neck it was somewhere between seventy-five and a hundred feet in length. Its head was ridiculously small; its body was unarmored, but its great bulk gave it a most formidable appearance. My experience of Caspakian life led me to believe that the gigantic creature would but have to see us to attack us, and so I raised my rifle and at the same time drew away toward some brush which offered concealment; but Ajor only laughed, and picking up a stick, ran toward the great thing, shouting. The little head was raised high upon the long neck as the animal stupidly looked here and there in search of the author of the disturbance. At last its eyes discovered tiny little Ajor, and then she hurled the stick at the diminutive head. With a cry that sounded not unlike the bleat of a sheep, the colossal creature shuffled into the water and was soon submerged.

As I slowly recalled my collegiate studies and paleontological readings in Bowen's textbooks, I realized that I had looked upon nothing less than a diplodocus of the Upper Jurassic; but how infinitely different was the true, live thing from the crude restorations of Hatcher and Holland! I had had the idea that the diplodocus was a land-animal, but evidently it is partially amphibious. I have seen several since my first encounter, and in each case the creature took to the sea for concealment as soon as it was disturbed. With the exception of its gigantic tail, it has no weapon of defense; but with this appendage it can lash so terrific a blow as to lay low even a giant cave-bear, stunned and broken. It is a stupid, simple, gentle beast—one of the few within Caspak which such a description might even remotely fit.

For three nights we slept in trees, finding no caves or other places of concealment. Here we were free from the attacks of the large land carnivora; but the smaller flying reptiles, the snakes, leopards, and panthers were a constant menace, though by no means as much to be feared as the huge beasts that roamed the surface of the earth.

At the close of the third day Ajor and I were able to converse with considerable fluency, and it was a great relief to both of us, especially to Ajor. She now did nothing but ask questions whenever I would let her, which could not be all the time, as our preservation depended largely upon the rapidity with which I could gain knowledge of the geography and customs of Caspak, and accordingly I had to ask numerous questions myself.

I enjoyed immensely hearing and answering her, so naive were many of her queries and so filled with wonder was she at the things I told her of the world beyond the lofty barriers of Caspak; not once did she seem to doubt me, however marvelous my statements must have seemed; and doubtless they were the cause of marvel to Ajor, who before had never dreamed that any life existed beyond Caspak and the life she knew.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Artless though many of her questions were, they evidenced a keen intellect and a shrewdness which seemed far beyond her years of her experience. Altogether I was finding my little savage a mighty interesting and companionable person, and I often thanked the kind fate that directed the crossing of our paths. From her I learned much of Caspak, but there still remained the mystery that had proved so baffling to Bowen Tyler—the total absence of young among the ape, the semihuman and the human races with which both he and I had come in contact upon opposite shores of the inland sea. Ajor tried to explain the matter to me, though it was apparent that she could not conceive how so natural a condition should demand explanation. She told me that among the Galus there were a few babies, that she had once been a baby but that most of her people “came up,” as he put it, “cor sva jo,” or literally, “from the beginning”; and as they all did when they used that phrase, she would wave a broad gesture toward the south.

“For long,” she explained, leaning very close to me and whispering the words into my ear while she cast apprehensive glances about and mostly skyward, “for long my mother kept me hidden lest the Wieroo, passing through the air by night, should come and take me away to Oo-oh.” And the child shuddered as she voiced the word. I tried to get her to tell me more; but her terror was so real when she spoke of the Wieroo and the land of Oo-oh where they dwell that I at last desisted, though I did learn that the Wieroo carried off only female babes and occasionally women of the Galus who had “come up from the beginning.” It was all very mysterious and unfathomable, but I got the idea that the Wieroo were creatures of imagination—the demons or gods of her race, omniscient and omnipresent. This led me to assume that the Galus had a religious sense, and further questioning brought out the fact that such was the case. Ajor spoke in tones of reverence of Luata, the god of heat and life. The word is derived from two others: Lua, meaning sun, and ata, meaning variously eggs, life, young, and reproduction. She told me that they worshiped Luata in several forms, as fire, the sun, eggs and other material objects which suggested heat and reproduction.

I had noticed that whenever I built a fire, Ajor outlined in the air before her with a forefinger an isosceles triangle, and that she did the same in the morning when she first viewed the sun. At first I had not connected her act with anything in particular, but after we learned to converse and she had explained a little of her religious superstitions, I realized that she was making the sign of the triangle as a Roman Catholic makes the sign of the cross. Always the short side of the triangle was uppermost. As she explained all this to me, she pointed to the decorations on her golden armlets, upon the knob of her dagger-hilt and upon the band which encircled her right leg above the knee—always was the design partly made up of isosceles triangles, and when she explained the significance of this particular geometric figure, I at once grasped its appropriateness.

We were now in the country of the Band-lu, the spearmen of Caspak. Bowen had remarked in his narrative that these people were analogous to the so-called Cro-Magnon race of the Upper Paleolithic, and I was therefore very anxious to see them. Nor was I to be disappointed; I saw them, all right! We had left the Sto-lu country and literally fought our way through cordons of wild beasts for two days when we decided to make camp a little earlier than usual, owing to the fact that we had reached a line of cliffs running east and west in which were numerous likely cave-lodgings. We were both very tired, and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the sight of these caverns, several of which could be easily barricaded, decided us to halt until the following morning. It took but a few minutes' exploration to discover one particular cavern high up the face of the cliff which seemed ideal for our purpose. It opened upon a narrow ledge where we could build our cook-fire; the opening was so small that we had to lie flat and wriggle through it to gain ingress, while the interior was high-ceiled and spacious. I lighted a faggot and looked about; but as far as I could see, the chamber ran back into the cliff.

Laying aside my rifle, pistol and heavy ammunition-belt, I left Ajor in the cave while I went down to gather firewood. We already had meat and fruits which we had gathered just before reaching the cliffs, and my canteen was filled with fresh water. Therefore, all we required was fuel, and as I always saved Ajor's strength when I could, I would not permit her to accompany me. The poor girl was very tired; but she would have gone with me until she dropped, I know, so loyal was she. She was the best comrade in the world, and sometimes I regretted and sometimes I was glad that she was not of my own caste, for had she been, I should unquestionably have fallen in love with her. As it was, we traveled together like two boys, with huge respect for each other but no softer sentiment.

There was little timber close to the base of the cliffs, and so I was forced to enter the wood some two hundred yards distant. I realize now how foolhardy was my act in such a land as Caspak, teeming with danger and with death; but there is a certain amount of fool in every man; and whatever proportion of it I own must have been in the ascendant that day, for the truth of the matter is that I went down into those woods absolutely defenseless; and I paid the price, as people usually do for their indiscretions. As I searched around in the brush for likely pieces of firewood, my head bowed and my eyes upon the ground, I suddenly felt a great weight hurl itself upon me. I struggled to my knees and seized my assailant, a huge, naked man—naked except for a breechcloth of snakeskin, the head hanging down to the knees. The fellow was armed with a stone-shod spear, a stone knife and a hatchet. In his black hair were several gay-colored feathers. As we struggled to and fro, I was slowly gaining advantage of him, when a score of his fellows came running up and overpowered me.

They bound my hands behind me with long rawhide thongs and then surveyed me critically. I found them fine-looking specimens of manhood, for the most part. There were some among them who bore a resemblance to the Sto-lu and were hairy; but the majority had massive heads and not unlovely features. There was little about them to suggest the ape, as in the Sto-lu, Bo-lu and Alus. I expected them to kill me at once, but they did not. Instead they questioned me; but it was evident that they did not believe my story, for they scoffed and laughed.

"The Galus have turned you out," they cried. "If you go back to them, you will die. If you remain here, you will die. We shall kill you; but first we shall have a dance and you shall dance with us—the dance of death."

It sounded quite reassuring! But I knew that I was not to be killed immediately, and so I took heart.

They led me toward the cliffs, and as we approached them, I glanced up and was sure that I saw Ajor's bright eyes peering down upon us from our lofty cave; but she gave

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

no sign if she saw me; and we passed on, rounded the end of the cliffs and proceeded along the opposite face of them until we came to a section literally honeycombed with caves. All about, upon the ground and swarming the ledges before the entrances, were hundreds of members of the tribe. There were many women but no babes or children, though I noticed that the females had better developed breasts than any that I had seen among the hatchet-men, the club-men, the Alus or the apes. In fact, among the lower orders of Caspakian man the female breast is but a rudimentary organ, barely suggested in the apes and Alus, and only a little more defined in the Bolu and Sto-lu, though always increasingly so until it is found about half developed in the females of the spearmen; yet never was there an indication that the females had suckled young; nor were there any young among them. Some of the Band-lu women were quite comely. The figures of all, both men and women, were symmetrical though heavy, and though there were some who verged strongly upon the Sto-lu type, there were others who were positively handsome and whose bodies were quite hairless. The Alus are all bearded, but among the Bolu the beard disappears in the women. The Sto-lu men show a sparse beard, the Band-lu none; and there is little hair upon the bodies of their women.

The members of the tribe showed great interest in me, especially in my clothing, the like of which, of course, they never had seen. They pulled and hauled upon me, and some of them struck me; but for the most part they were not inclined to brutality. It was only the hairier ones, who most closely resembled the Stolu, who maltreated me. At last my captors led me into a great cave in the mouth of which a fire was burning. The floor was littered with filth, including the bones of many animals, and the atmosphere reeked with the stench of human bodies and putrefying flesh. Here they fed me, releasing my arms, and I ate of half-cooked aurochs steak and a stew which may have been made of snakes, for many of the long, round pieces of meat suggested them most nauseatingly.

The meal completed, they led me well within the cavern, which they lighted with torches stuck in various crevices in the light of which I saw, to my astonishment, that the walls were covered with paintings and etchings. There were aurochs, red deer, saber-tooth tiger, cave-bear, hyaenadon and many other examples of the fauna of Caspak done in colors, usually of four shades of brown, or scratched upon the surface of the rock. Often they were superimposed upon each other until it required careful examination to trace out the various outlines. But they all showed a rather remarkable aptitude for delineation which further fortified Bowen's comparisons between these people and the extinct Cro-Magnons whose ancient art is still preserved in the caverns of Niaux and Le Portel. The Band-lu, however, did not have the bow and arrow, and in this respect they differ from their extinct progenitors, or descendants, of Western Europe.

Should any of my friends chance to read the story of my adventures upon Caprona, I hope they will not be bored by these diversions, and if they are, I can only say that I am writing my memoirs for my own edification and therefore setting down those things which interested me particularly at the time. I have no desire that the general public should ever have access to these pages; but it is possible that my friends may, and also certain savants who are interested; and to them, while I do not apologize for my philosophizing, I humbly explain that they are witnessing the groupings of a finite mind after the infinite, the search for explanations of the inexplicable.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

In a far recess of the cavern my captors bade me halt. Again my hands were secured, and this time my feet as well. During the operation they questioned me, and I was mighty glad that the marked similarity between the various tribal tongues of Caspak enabled us to understand each other perfectly, even though they were unable to believe or even to comprehend the truth of my origin and the circumstances of my advent in Caspak; and finally they left me saying that they would come for me before the dance of death upon the morrow. Before they departed with their torches, I saw that I had not been conducted to the farthest extremity of the cavern, for a dark and gloomy corridor led beyond my prison room into the heart of the cliff.

I could not but marvel at the immensity of this great underground grotto. Already I had traversed several hundred yards of it, from many points of which other corridors diverged. The whole cliff must be honeycombed with apartments and passages of which this community occupied but a comparatively small part, so that the possibility of the more remote passages being the lair of savage beasts that have other means of ingress and egress than that used by the Band-lu filled me with dire forebodings.

I believe that I am not ordinarily hysterically apprehensive; yet I must confess that under the conditions with which I was confronted, I felt my nerves to be somewhat shaken. On the morrow I was to die some sort of nameless death for the diversion of a savage horde, but the morrow held fewer terrors for me than the present, and I submit to any fair-minded man if it is not a terrifying thing to lie bound hand and foot in the Stygian blackness of an immense cave peopled by unknown dangers in a land overrun by hideous beasts and reptiles of the greatest ferocity. At any moment, perhaps at this very moment, some silent-footed beast of prey might catch my scent where it laired in some contiguous passage, and might creep stealthily upon me. I craned my neck about, and stared through the inky darkness for the twin spots of blazing hate which I knew would herald the coming of my executioner. So real were the imaginings of my overwrought brain that I broke into a cold sweat in absolute conviction that some beast was close before me; yet the hours dragged, and no sound broke the grave-like stillness of the cavern.

During that period of eternity many events of my life passed before my mental vision, a vast parade of friends and occurrences which would be blotted out forever on the morrow. I cursed myself for the foolish act which had taken me from the search-party that so depended upon me, and I wondered what progress, if any, they had made. Were they still beyond the barrier cliffs, awaiting my return? Or had they found a way into Caspak? I felt that the latter would be the truth, for the party was not made up of men easily turned from a purpose. Quite probable it was that they were already searching for me; but that they would ever find a trace of me I doubted. Long since, had I come to the conclusion that it was beyond human prowess to circle the shores of the inland sea of Caspak in the face of the myriad menaces which lurked in every shadow by day and by night. Long since, had I given up any hope of reaching the point where I had made my entry into the country, and so I was now equally convinced that our entire expedition had been worse than futile before ever it was conceived, since Bowen J. Tyler and his wife could not by any possibility have survived during all these long months; no more could Bradley and his party of seamen be yet in existence. If the superior force and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

equipment of my party enabled them to circle the north end of the sea, they might some day come upon the broken wreck of my plane hanging in the great tree to the south; but long before that, my bones would be added to the litter upon the floor of this mighty cavern.

And through all my thoughts, real and fanciful, moved the image of a perfect girl, clear-eyed and strong and straight and beautiful, with the carriage of a queen and the supple, undulating grace of a leopard. Though I loved my friends, their fate seemed of less importance to me than the fate of this little barbarian stranger for whom, I had convinced myself many a time, I felt no greater sentiment than passing friendship for a fellow-wayfarer in this land of horrors. Yet I so worried and fretted about her and her future that at last I quite forgot my own predicament, though I still struggled intermittently with bonds in vain endeavor to free myself; as much, however, that I might hasten to her protection as that I might escape the fate which had been planned for me. And while I was thus engaged and had for the moment forgotten my apprehensions concerning prowling beasts, I was startled into tense silence by a distinct and unmistakable sound coming from the dark corridor farther toward the heart of the cliff—the sound of padded feet moving stealthily in my direction.

I believe that never before in all my life, even amidst the terrors of childhood nights, have I suffered such a sensation of extreme horror as I did that moment in which I realized that I must lie bound and helpless while some horrid beast of prey crept upon me to devour me in that utter darkness of the Bandlu pits of Caspak. I reeked with cold sweat, and my flesh crawled—I could feel it crawl. If ever I came nearer to abject cowardice, I do not recall the instance; and yet it was not that I was afraid to die, for I had long since given myself up as lost—a few days of Caspak must impress anyone with the utter nothingness of life. The waters, the land, the air teem with it, and always it is being devoured by some other form of life. Life is the cheapest thing in Caspak, as it is the cheapest thing on earth and, doubtless, the cheapest cosmic production. No, I was not afraid to die; in fact, I prayed for death, that I might be relieved of the frightfulness of the interval of life which remained to me—the waiting, the awful waiting, for that fearsome beast to reach me and to strike.

Presently it was so close that I could hear its breathing, and then it touched me and leaped quickly back as though it had come upon me unexpectedly. For long moments no sound broke the sepulchral silence of the cave. Then I heard a movement on the part of the creature near me, and again it touched me, and I felt something like a hairless hand pass over my face and down until it touched the collar of my flannel shirt. And then, subdued, but filled with pent emotion, a voice cried: "Tom!"

I think I nearly fainted, so great was the reaction. "Ajour!" I managed to say. "Ajour, my girl, can it be you?"

"Oh, Tom!" she cried again in a trembly little voice and flung herself upon me, sobbing softly. I had not known that Ajour could cry.

As she cut away my bonds, she told me that from the entrance to our cave she had seen the Band-lu coming out of the forest with me, and she had followed until they took me into the cave, which she had seen was upon the opposite side of the cliff in which ours was located; and then, knowing that she could do nothing for me until after the Band-lu

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

slept, she had hastened to return to our cave. With difficulty she had reached it, after having been stalked by a cave-lion and almost seized. I trembled at the risk she had run.

It had been her intention to wait until after midnight, when most of the carnivora would have made their kills, and then attempt to reach the cave in which I was imprisoned and rescue me. She explained that with my rifle and pistol—both of which she assured me she could use, having watched me so many times—she planned upon frightening the Band-lu and forcing them to give me up. Brave little girl! She would have risked her life willingly to save me. But some time after she reached our cave she heard voices from the far recesses within, and immediately concluded that we had but found another entrance to the caves which the Band-lu occupied upon the other face of the cliff. Then she had set out through those winding passages and in total darkness had groped her way, guided solely by a marvelous sense of direction, to where I lay. She had had to proceed with utmost caution lest she fall into some abyss in the darkness and in truth she had thrice come upon sheer drops and had been forced to take the most frightful risks to pass them. I shudder even now as I contemplate what this girl passed through for my sake and how she enhanced her peril in loading herself down with the weight of my arms and ammunition and the awkwardness of the long rifle which she was unaccustomed to bearing.

I could have knelt and kissed her hand in reverence and gratitude; nor am I ashamed to say that that is precisely what I did after I had been freed from my bonds and heard the story of her trials.

Brave little Ajor! Wonder-girl out of the dim, unthinkable past! Never before had she been kissed; but she seemed to sense something of the meaning of the new caress, for she leaned forward in the dark and pressed her own lips to my forehead. A sudden urge surged through me to seize her and strain her to my bosom and cover her hot young lips with the kisses of a real love, but I did not do so, for I knew that I did not love her; and to have kissed her thus, with passion, would have been to inflict a great wrong upon her who had offered her life for mine.

No, Ajor should be as safe with me as with her own mother, if she had one, which I was inclined to doubt, even though she told me that she had once been a babe and hidden by her mother. I had come to doubt if there was such a thing as a mother in Caspak, a mother such as we know. From the Bolu to the Kro-lu there is no word which corresponds with our word mother. They speak of ata and cor sva jo, meaning reproduction and from the beginning, and point toward the south; but no one has a mother.

After considerable difficulty we gained what we thought was our cave, only to find that it was not, and then we realized that we were lost in the labyrinthine mazes of the great cavern. We retraced our steps and sought the point from which we had started, but only succeeded in losing ourselves the more. Ajor was aghast—not so much from fear of our predicament; but that she should have failed in the functioning of that wonderful sense she possessed in common with most other creatures Caspakian, which makes it possible for them to move unerringly from place to place without compass or guide.

Hand in hand we crept along, searching for an opening into the outer world, yet realizing that at each step we might be burrowing more deeply into the heart of the great cliff, or circling futilely in the vague wandering that could end only in death. And the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

darkness! It was almost palpable, and utterly depressing. I had matches, and in some of the more difficult places I struck one; but we couldn't afford to waste them, and so we groped our way slowly along, doing the best we could to keep to one general direction in the hope that it would eventually lead us to an opening into the outer world. When I struck matches, I noticed that the walls bore no paintings; nor was there other sign that man had penetrated this far within the cliff, nor any spoor of animals of other kinds.

It would be difficult to guess at the time we spent wandering through those black corridors, climbing steep ascents, feeling our way along the edges of bottomless pits, never knowing at what moment we might be plunged into some abyss and always haunted by the ever-present terror of death by starvation and thirst. As difficult as it was, I still realized that it might have been infinitely worse had I had another companion than Ajor—courageous, uncomplaining, loyal little Ajor! She was tired and hungry and thirsty, and she must have been discouraged; but she never faltered in her cheerfulness. I asked her if she was afraid, and she replied that here the Wieroo could not get her, and that if she died of hunger, she would at least die with me and she was quite content that such should be her end. At the time I attributed her attitude to something akin to a doglike devotion to a new master who had been kind to her. I can take oath to the fact that I did not think it was anything more.

Whether we had been imprisoned in the cliff for a day or a week I could not say; nor even now do I know. We became very tired and hungry; the hours dragged; we slept at least twice, and then we rose and stumbled on, always weaker and weaker. There were ages during which the trend of the corridors was always upward. It was heartbreaking work for people in the state of exhaustion in which we then were, but we clung tenaciously to it. We stumbled and fell; we sank through pure physical inability to retain our feet; but always we managed to rise at last and go on. At first, wherever it had been possible, we had walked hand in hand lest we become separated, and later, when I saw that Ajor was weakening rapidly, we went side by side, I supporting her with an arm about her waist. I still retained the heavy burden of my armament; but with the rifle slung to my back, my hands were free. When I too showed indisputable evidences of exhaustion, Ajor suggested that I lay aside my arms and ammunition; but I told her that as it would mean certain death for me to traverse Caspak without them, I might as well take the chance of dying here in the cave with them, for there was the other chance that we might find our way to liberty.

There came a time when Ajor could no longer walk, and then it was that I picked her up in my arms and carried her. She begged me to leave her, saying that after I found an exit, I could come back and get her; but she knew, and she knew that I knew, that if ever I did leave her, I could never find her again. Yet she insisted. Barely had I sufficient strength to take a score of steps at a time; then I would have to sink down and rest for five to ten minutes. I don't know what force urged me on and kept me going in the face of an absolute conviction that my efforts were utterly futile. I counted us already as good as dead; but still I dragged myself along until the time came that I could no longer rise, but could only crawl along a few inches at a time, dragging Ajor beside me. Her sweet voice, now almost inaudible from weakness, implored me to abandon her and save myself—she seemed to think only of me. Of course I couldn't have left her there alone, no matter how

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

much I might have desired to do so; but the fact of the matter was that I didn't desire to leave her. What I said to her then came very simply and naturally to my lips. It couldn't very well have been otherwise, I imagine, for with death so close, I doubt if people are much inclined to heroics. "I would rather not get out at all, Ajor," I said to her, "than to get out without you." We were resting against a rocky wall, and Ajor was leaning against me, her head on my breast. I could feel her press closer to me, and one hand stroked my arm in a weak caress; but she didn't say anything, nor were words necessary.

After a few minutes' more rest, we started on again upon our utterly hopeless way; but I soon realized that I was weakening rapidly, and presently I was forced to admit that I was through. "It's no use, Ajor," I said, "I've come as far as I can. It may be that if I sleep, I can go on again after," but I knew that that was not true, and that the end was near. "Yes, sleep," said Ajor. "We will sleep together—forever."

She crept close to me as I lay on the hard floor and pillowed her head upon my arm. With the little strength which remained to me, I drew her up until our lips touched, and, then I whispered: "Goodbye!" I must have lost consciousness almost immediately, for I recall nothing more until I suddenly awoke out of a troubled sleep, during which I dreamed that I was drowning, to find the cave lighted by what appeared to be diffused daylight, and a tiny trickle of water running down the corridor and forming a puddle in the little depression in which it chanced that Ajor and I lay. I turned my eyes quickly upon Ajor, fearful for what the light might disclose; but she still breathed, though very faintly. Then I searched about for an explanation of the light, and soon discovered that it came from about a bend in the corridor just ahead of us and at the top of a steep incline; and instantly I realized that Ajor and I had stumbled by night almost to the portal of salvation. Had chance taken us a few yards further, up either of the corridors which diverged from ours just ahead of us, we might have been irrevocably lost; we might still be lost; but at least we could die in the light of day, out of the horrid blackness of this terrible cave.

I tried to rise, and found that sleep had given me back a portion of my strength; and then I tasted the water and was further refreshed. I shook Ajor gently by the shoulder; but she did not open her eyes, and then I gathered a few drops of water in my cupped palm and let them trickle between her lips. This revived her so that she raised her lids, and when she saw me, she smiled.

"What happened?" she asked. "Where are we?"

"We are at the end of the corridor," I replied, and daylight is coming in from the outside world just ahead. We are saved, Ajor!"

She sat up then and looked about, and then, quite womanlike, she burst into tears. It was the reaction, of course; and then too, she was very weak. I took her in my arms and quieted her as best I could, and finally, with my help, she got to her feet; for she, as well as I, had found some slight recuperation in sleep. Together we staggered upward toward the light, and at the first turn we saw an opening a few yards ahead of us and a leaden sky beyond—a leaden sky from which was falling a drizzling rain, the author of our little, trickling stream which had given us drink when we were most in need of it.

The cave had been damp and cold; but as we crawled through the aperture, the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

muggy warmth of the Caspakian air caressed and confronted us; even the rain was warmer than the atmosphere of those dark corridors. We had water now, and warmth, and I was sure that Caspak would soon offer us meat or fruit; but as we came to where we could look about, we saw that we were upon the summit of the cliffs, where there seemed little reason to expect game. However, there were trees, and among them we soon descried edible fruits with which we broke our long fast.

We spent two days upon the cliff-top, resting and recuperating. There was some small game which gave us meat, and the little pools of rainwater were sufficient to quench our thirst. The sun came out a few hours after we emerged from the cave, and in its warmth we soon cast off the gloom which our recent experiences had saddled upon us.

Upon the morning of the third day we set out to search for a path down to the valley. Below us, to the north, we saw a large pool lying at the foot of the cliffs, and in it we could discern the women of the Band-lu lying in the shallow waters, while beyond and close to the base of the mighty barrier-cliffs there was a large party of Band-lu warriors going north to hunt. We had a splendid view from our lofty cliff-top. Dimly, to the west, we could see the farther shore of the inland sea, and southwest the large southern island loomed distinctly before us. A little east of north was the northern island, which Ajor, shuddering, whispered was the home of the Wieroo—the land of Oooh. It lay at the far end of the lake and was barely visible to us, being fully sixty miles away.

From our elevation, and in a clearer atmosphere, it would have stood out distinctly; but the air of Caspak is heavy with moisture, with the result that distant objects are blurred and indistinct. Ajor also told me that the mainland east of Oo-oh was her land—the land of the Galu. She pointed out the cliffs at its southern boundary, which mark the frontier, south of which lies the country of Kro-lu—the archers. We now had but to pass through the balance of the Band-lu territory and that of the Krolu to be within the confines of her own land; but that meant traversing thirty-five miles of hostile country filled with every imaginable terror, and possibly many beyond the powers of imagination. I would certainly have given a lot for my plane at that moment, for with it, twenty minutes would have landed us within the confines of Ajor's country.

We finally found a place where we could slip over the edge of the cliff onto a narrow ledge which seemed to give evidence of being something of a game-path to the valley, though it apparently had not been used for some time. I lowered Ajor at the end of my rifle and then slid over myself, and I am free to admit that my hair stood on end during the process, for the drop was considerable and the ledge appallingly narrow, with a frightful drop sheer below down to the rocks at the base of the cliff; but with Ajor there to catch and steady me, I made it all right, and then we set off down the trail toward the valley. There were two or three more bad places, but for the most part it was an easy descent, and we came to the highest of the Band-lu caves without further trouble. Here we went more slowly, lest we should be set upon by some member of the tribe.

We must have passed about half the Band-lu cavelevels before we were accosted, and then a huge fellow stepped out in front of me, barring our further progress.

"Who are you?" he asked; and he recognized me and I him, for he had been one of those who had led me back into the cave and bound me the night that I had been captured. From me his gaze went to Ajor. He was a fine-looking man with clear, intelligent

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eyes, a good forehead and superb physique—by far the highest type of Caspakian I had yet seen, barring Ajor, of course.

“You are a true Galu,” he said to Ajor, “but this man is of a different mold. He has the face of a Galu, but his weapons and the strange skins he wears upon his body are not of the Galus nor of Caspak. Who is he?”

“He is Tom,” replied Ajor succinctly.

“There is no such people,” asserted the Bandlu quite truthfully, toying with his spear in a most suggestive manner.

“My name is Tom,” I explained, “and I am from a country beyond Caspak.” I thought it best to propitiate him if possible, because of the necessity of conserving ammunition as well as to avoid the loud alarm of a shot which might bring other Band-lu warriors upon us. “I am from America, a land of which you never heard, and I am seeking others of my countrymen who are in Caspak and from whom I am lost. I have no quarrel with you or your people. Let us go our way in peace.”

“You are going there?” he asked, and pointed toward the north.

“I am,” I replied.

He was silent for several minutes, apparently weighing some thought in his mind. At last he spoke.

“What is that?” he asked. “And what is that?” He pointed first at my rifle and then to my pistol.

“They are weapons,” I replied, “weapons which kill at a great distance.” I pointed to the women in the pool beneath us. “With this,” I said, tapping my pistol, “I could kill as many of those women as I cared to, without moving a step from where we now stand.”

He looked his incredulity, but I went on. “And with this”—I weighed my rifle at the balance in the palm of my right hand—“I could slay one of those distant warriors.” And I waved my left hand toward the tiny figures of the hunters far to the north.

The fellow laughed. “Do it,” he cried derisively, “and then it may be that I shall believe the balance of your strange story.”

“But I do not wish to kill any of them,” I replied. “Why should I?”

“Why not?” he insisted. “They would have killed you when they had you prisoner. They would kill you now if they could get their hands on you, and they would eat you into the bargain. But I know why you do not try it—it is because you have spoken lies; your weapon will not kill at a great distance. It is only a queerly wrought club. For all I know, you are nothing more than a lowly Bo-lu.”

“Why should you wish me to kill your own people?” I asked.

“They are no longer my people,” he replied proudly. “Last night, in the very middle of the night, the call came to me. Like that it came into my head”—and he struck his hands together smartly once—“that I had risen. I have been waiting for it and expecting it for a long time; today I am a Krolu. Today I go into the coslupak” (unpeopled country, or literally, no man’s land) “between the Band-lu and the Kro-lu, and there I fashion my bow and my arrows and my shield; there I hunt the red deer for the leathern jerkin which is the badge of my new estate. When these things are done, I can go to the chief of the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Kro-lu, and he dare not refuse me. That is why you may kill those low Band-lu if you wish to live, for I am in a hurry.

"But why do you wish to kill me?" I asked.

He looked puzzled and finally gave it up. "I do not know," he admitted. "It is the way in Caspak. If we do not kill, we shall be killed, therefore it is wise to kill first whomever does not belong to one's own people. This morning I hid in my cave till the others were gone upon the hunt, for I knew that they would know at once that I had become a Kro-lu and would kill me. They will kill me if they find me in the coslupak; so will the Kro-lu if they come upon me before I have won my Kro-lu weapons and jerkin. You would kill me if you could, and that is the reason I know that you speak lies when you say that your weapons will kill at a great distance. Would they, you would long since have killed me. Come! I have no more time to waste in words. I will spare the woman and take her with me to the Kro-lu, for she is comely." And with that he advanced upon me with raised spear.

My rifle was at my hip at the ready. He was so close that I did not need to raise it to my shoulder, having but to pull the trigger to send him into Kingdom Come whenever I chose; but yet I hesitated. It was difficult to bring myself to take a human life. I could feel no enmity toward this savage barbarian who acted almost as wholly upon instinct as might a wild beast, and to the last moment I was determined to seek some way to avoid what now seemed inevitable. Ajor stood at my shoulder, her knife ready in her hand and a sneer on her lips at his suggestion that he would take her with him.

Just as I thought I should have to fire, a chorus of screams broke from the women beneath us. I saw the man halt and glance downward, and following his example my eyes took in the panic and its cause. The women had, evidently, been quitting the pool and slowly returning toward the caves, when they were confronted by a monstrous cave-lion which stood directly between them and their cliffs in the center of the narrow path that led down to the pool among the tumbled rocks. Screaming, the women were rushing madly back to the pool.

"It will do them no good," remarked the man, a trace of excitement in his voice. "It will do them no good, for the lion will wait until they come out and take as many as he can carry away; and there is one there," he added, a trace of sadness in his tone, "whom I hoped would soon follow me to the Kro-lu. Together have we come up from the beginning." He raised his spear above his head and poised it ready to hurl downward at the lion. "She is nearest to him," he muttered. "He will get her and she will never come to me among the Kro-lu, or ever thereafter. It is useless! No warrior lives who could hurl a weapon so great a distance."

But even as he spoke, I was leveling my rifle upon the great brute below; and as he ceased speaking, I squeezed the trigger. My bullet must have struck to a hair the point at which I had aimed, for it smashed the brute's spine back of his shoulders and tore on through his heart, dropping him dead in his tracks. For a moment the women were as terrified by the report of the rifle as they had been by the menace of the lion; but when they saw that the loud noise had evidently destroyed their enemy, they came creeping cautiously back to examine the carcass.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The man, toward whom I had immediately turned after firing, lest he should pursue his threatened attack, stood staring at me in amazement and admiration.

"Why," he asked, "if you could do that, did you not kill me long before?"

"I told you," I replied, "that I had no quarrel with you. I do not care to kill men with whom I have no quarrel."

But he could not seem to get the idea through his head. "I can believe now that you are not of Caspak," he admitted, "for no Caspakian would have permitted such an opportunity to escape him." This, however, I found later to be an exaggeration, as the tribes of the west coast and even the Kro-lu of the east coast are far less bloodthirsty than he would have had me believe. "And your weapon!" he continued. "You spoke true words when I thought you spoke lies." And then, suddenly: "Let us be friends!"

I turned to Ajor. "Can I trust him?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "Why not? Has he not asked to be friends?"

I was not at the time well enough acquainted with Caspakian ways to know that truthfulness and loyalty are two of the strongest characteristics of these primitive people. They are not sufficiently cultured to have become adept in hypocrisy, treason and dissimulation. There are, of course, a few exceptions.

"We can go north together," continued the warrior. "I will fight for you, and you can fight for me. Until death will I serve you, for you have saved So-al, whom I had given up as dead." He threw down his spear and covered both his eyes with the palms of his two hands. I looked inquiringly toward Ajor, who explained as best she could that this was the form of the Caspakian oath of allegiance. "You need never fear him after this," she concluded.

"What should I do?" I asked.

"Take his hands down from before his eyes and return his spear to him," she explained.

I did as she bade, and the man seemed very pleased. I then asked what I should have done had I not wished to accept his friendship. They told me that had I walked away, the moment that I was out of sight of the warrior we would have become deadly enemies again. "But I could so easily have killed him as he stood there defenseless!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," replied the warrior, "but no man with good sense blinds his eyes before one whom he does not trust."

It was rather a decent compliment, and it taught me just how much I might rely on the loyalty of my new friend. I was glad to have him with us, for he knew the country and was evidently a fearless warrior. I wished that I might have recruited a battalion like him.

As the women were now approaching the cliffs, To-mar the warrior suggested that we make our way to the valley before they could intercept us, as they might attempt to detain us and were almost certain to set upon Ajor. So we hastened down the narrow path, reaching the foot of the cliffs but a short distance ahead of the women. They called after us to stop; but we kept on at a rapid walk, not wishing to have any trouble with them, which could only result in the death of some of them.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

We had proceeded about a mile when we heard some one behind us calling To-mar by name, and when we stopped and looked around, we saw a woman running rapidly toward us. As she approached nearer I could see that she was a very comely creature, and like all her sex that I had seen in Caspak, apparently young.

"It is So-al!" exclaimed To-mar. "Is she mad that she follows me thus?"

In another moment the young woman stopped, panting, before us. She paid not the slightest attention to Ajor or me; but devouring To-mar with her sparkling eyes, she cried: "I have risen! I have risen!"

"So-al!" was all that the man could say.

"Yes," she went on, "the call came to me just before I quit the pool; but I did not know that it had come to you. I can see it in your eyes, To-mar, my To-mar! We shall go on together!" And she threw herself into his arms.

It was a very affecting sight, for it was evident that these two had been mates for a long time and that they had each thought that they were about to be separated by that strange law of evolution which holds good in Caspak and which was slowly unfolding before my incredulous mind. I did not then comprehend even a tithe of the wondrous process, which goes on eternally within the confines of Caprona's barrier cliffs nor am I any too sure that I do even now.

To-mar explained to So-al that it was I who had killed the cave-lion and saved her life, and that Ajor was my woman and thus entitled to the same loyalty which was my due.

At first Ajor and So-al were like a couple of stranger cats on a back fence but soon they began to accept each other under something of an armed truce, and later became fast friends. So-al was a mighty fine-looking girl, built like a tigress as to strength and sinuosity, but withal sweet and womanly. Ajor and I came to be very fond of her, and she was, I think, equally fond of us. To-mar was very much of a man—a savage, if you will, but none the less a man.

Finding that traveling in company with To-mar made our journey both easier and safer, Ajor and I did not continue on our way alone while the novitiates delayed their approach to the Kro-lu country in order that they might properly fit themselves in the matter of arms and apparel, but remained with them. Thus we became well acquainted—to such an extent that we looked forward with regret to the day when they took their places among their new comrades and we should be forced to continue upon our way alone. It was a matter of much concern to To-mar that the Kro-lu would undoubtedly not receive Ajor and me in a friendly manner, and that consequently we should have to avoid these people.

It would have been very helpful to us could we have made friends with them, as their country abutted directly upon that of the Galus. Their friendship would have meant that Ajor's dangers were practically passed, and that I had accomplished fully one-half of my long journey. In view of what I had passed through, I often wondered what chance I had to complete that journey in search of my friends. The further south I should travel on the west side of the island, the more frightful would the dangers become as I neared the stamping-grounds of the more hideous reptilia and the haunts of the Alus and the Ho-lu, all of which were at the southern half of the island; and then if I should not find the mem-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

bers of my party, what was to become of me? I could not live for long in any portion of Caspak with which I was familiar; the moment my ammunition was exhausted, I should be as good as dead.

There was a chance that the Galus would receive me; but even Ajor could not say definitely whether they would or not, and even provided that they would, could I retrace my steps from the beginning, after failing to find my own people, and return to the far northern land of Galus? I doubted it. However, I was learning from Ajor, who was more or less of a fatalist, a philosophy which was as necessary in Caspak to peace of mind as is faith to the devout Christian of the outer world.

Chapter 5

We were sitting before a little fire inside a safe grotto one night shortly after we had quit the cliff-dwellings of the Band-lu, when So-al raised a question which it had never occurred to me to propound to Ajor. She asked her why she had left her own people and how she had come so far south as the country of the Alus, where I had found her.

At first Ajor hesitated to explain; but at last she consented, and for the first time I heard the complete story of her origin and experiences. For my benefit she entered into greater detail of explanation than would have been necessary had I been a native Caspakian.

"I am a cos-ata-lo," commenced Ajor, and then she turned toward me. "A cos-ata-lo, my Tom, is a woman" (lo) "who did not come from an egg and thus on up from the beginning." (Cor sva jo.) "I was a babe at my mother's breast. Only among the Galus are such, and then but infrequently. The Wieroo get most of us; but my mother hid me until I had attained such size that the Wieroo could not readily distinguish me from one who had come up from the beginning.

I knew both my mother and my father, as only such as I may. My father is high chief among the Galus. His name is Jor, and both he and my mother came up from the beginning; but one of them, probably my mother, had completed the seven cycles" (approximately seven hundred years), "with the result that their offspring might be cos-ata-lo, or born as are all the children of your race, my Tom, as you tell me is the fact. I was therefore apart from my fellows in that my children would probably be as I, of a higher state of evolution, and so I was sought by the men of my people; but none of them appealed to me. I cared for none. The most persistent was Du-seen, a huge warrior of whom my father stood in considerable fear, since it was quite possible that Du-seen could wrest from him his chieftainship of the Galus. He has a large following of the newer Galus, those most recently come up from the Kro-lu, and as this class is usually much more powerful numerically than the older Galus, and as Du-seen's ambition knows no bounds, we have for a long time been expecting him to find some excuse for a break with Jor the High Chief, my father.

"A further complication lay in the fact that Du-seen wanted me, while I would have none of him, and then came evidence to my father's ears that he was in league with the Wieroo; a hunter, returning late at night, came trembling to my father, saying that he had seen Du-seen talking with a Wieroo in a lonely spot far from the village, and that plainly he had heard the words: 'If you will help me, I will help you—I will deliver into your

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

hands all cos-atalo among the Galus, now and hereafter; but for that service you must slay Jor the High Chief and bring terror and confusion to his followers.'

"Now, when my father heard this, he was angry; but he was also afraid—afraid for me, who am cosatalo. He called me to him and told me what he had heard, pointing out two ways in which we might frustrate Du-seen. The first was that I go to Du-seen as his mate, after which he would be loath to give me into the hands of the Wieroo or to further abide by the wicked compact he had made—a compact which would doom his own offspring, who would doubtless be as am I, their mother. The alternative was flight until Du-seen should have been overcome and punished. I chose the latter and fled toward the south. Beyond the confines of the Galu country is little danger from the Wieroo, who seek ordinarily only Galus of the highest orders. There are two excellent reasons for this: One is that from the beginning of time jealousy had existed between the Wieroo and the Galus as to which would eventually dominate the world. It seems generally conceded that that race which first reaches a point of evolution which permits them to produce young of their own species and of both sexes must dominate all other creatures. The Wieroo first began to produce their own kind—after which evolution from Galu to Wieroo ceased gradually until now it is unknown; but the Wieroo produce only males—which is why they steal our female young, and by stealing cos-ata-lo they increase their own chances of eventually reproducing both sexes and at the same time lessen ours. Already the Galus produce both male and female; but so carefully do the Wieroo watch us that few of the males ever grow to manhood, while even fewer are the females that are not stolen away. It is indeed a strange condition, for while our greatest enemies hate and fear us, they dare not exterminate us, knowing that they too would become extinct but for us.

"Ah, but could we once get a start, I am sure that when all were true cos-ata-lo there would have been evolved at last the true dominant race before which all the world would be forced to bow."

Ajor always spoke of the world as though nothing existed beyond Caspak. She could not seem to grasp the truth of my origin or the fact that there were countless other peoples outside her stern barrier-cliffs. She apparently felt that I came from an entirely different world. Where it was and how I came to Caspak from it were matters quite beyond her with which she refused to trouble her pretty head.

"Well," she continued, "and so I ran away to hide, intending to pass the cliffs to the south of Galu and find a retreat in the Kro-lu country. It would be dangerous, but there seemed no other way.

"The third night I took refuge in a large cave in the cliffs at the edge of my own country; upon the following day I would cross over into the Kro-lu country, where I felt that I should be reasonably safe from the Wieroo, though menaced by countless other dangers. However, to a cos-ata-lo any fate is preferable to that of falling into the clutches of the frightful Wieroo, from whose land none returns.

"I had been sleeping peacefully for several hours when I was awakened by a slight noise within the cavern. The moon was shining brightly, illumining the entrance, against which I saw silhouetted the dread figure of a Wieroo. There was no escape. The cave was shallow, the entrance narrow. I lay very still, hoping against hope, that the creature had

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but paused here to rest and might soon depart without discovering me; yet all the while I knew that he came seeking me.

"I waited, scarce breathing, watching the thing creep stealthily toward me, its great eyes luminous in the darkness of the cave's interior, and at last I knew that those eyes were directed upon me, for the Wieroo can see in the darkness better than even the lion or the tiger. But a few feet separated us when I sprang to my feet and dashed madly toward my menacer in a vain effort to dodge past him and reach the outside world. It was madness of course, for even had I succeeded temporarily, the Wieroo would have but followed and swooped down upon me from above. As it was, he reached forth and seized me, and though I struggled, he overpowered me. In the duel his long, white robe was nearly torn from him, and he became very angry, so that he trembled and beat his wings together in his rage.

"He asked me my name; but I would not answer him, and that angered him still more. At last he dragged me to the entrance of the cave, lifted me in his arms, spread his great wings and leaping into the air, flapped dismally through the night. I saw the moonlit landscape sliding away beneath me, and then we were out above the sea and on our way to Oo-oh, the country of the Wieroo.

"The dim outlines of Oo-oh were unfolding below us when there came from above a loud whirring of giant wings. The Wieroo and I glanced up simultaneously, to see a pair of huge jo-oos" (flying reptiles— pterodactyls) "swooping down upon us. The Wieroo wheeled and dropped almost to sea-level, and then raced southward in an effort to out-distance our pursuers. The great creatures, notwithstanding their enormous weight, are swift on their wings; but the Wieroo are swifter. Even with my added weight, the creature that bore me maintained his lead, though he could not increase it. Faster than the fastest wind we raced through the night, southward along the coast. Sometimes we rose to great heights, where the air was chill and the world below but a blur of dim outlines; but always the jo-oos stuck behind us.

"I knew that we had covered a great distance, for the rush of the wind by my face attested the speed of our progress, but I had no idea where we were when at last I realized that the Wieroo was weakening. One of the jo-oos gained on us and succeeded in heading us, so that my captor had to turn in toward the coast. Further and further they forced him to the left; lower and lower he sank. More labored was his breathing, and weaker the stroke of his once powerful wings. We were not ten feet above the ground when they overtook us, and at the edge of a forest. One of them seized the Wieroo by his right wing, and in an effort to free himself, he loosed his grasp upon me, dropping me to earth. Like a frightened ecca I leaped to my feet and raced for the sheltering sanctuary of the forest, where I knew neither could follow or seize me. Then I turned and looked back to see two great reptiles tear my abductor asunder and devour him on the spot.

"I was saved; yet I felt that I was lost. How far I was from the country of the Galus I could not guess; nor did it seem probable that I ever could make my way in safety to my native land.

"Day was breaking; soon the carnivora would stalk forth for their first kill; I was armed only with my knife. About me was a strange landscape—the flowers, the trees, the grasses, even, were different from those of my northern world, and presently there appeared

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

before me a creature fully as hideous as the Wieroo—a hairy manthing that barely walked erect. I shuddered, and then I fled. Through the hideous dangers that my forebears had endured in the earlier stages of their human evolution I fled; and always pursuing was the hairy monster that had discovered me. Later he was joined by others of his kind. They were the speechless men, the Alus, from whom you rescued me, my Tom. From then on, you know the story of my adventures, and from the first, I would endure them all again because they led me to you!”

It was very nice of her to say that, and I appreciated it. I felt that she was a mighty nice little girl whose friendship anyone might be glad to have; but I wished that when she touched me, those peculiar thrills would not run through me. It was most discomforting, because it reminded me of love; and I knew that I never could love this half-baked little barbarian. I was very much interested in her account of the Wieroo, which up to this time I had considered a purely mythological creature; but Ajor shuddered so at even the veriest mention of the name that I was loath to press the subject upon her, and so the Wieroo still remained a mystery to me.

While the Wieroo interested me greatly, I had little time to think about them, as our waking hours were filled with the necessities of existence—the constant battle for survival which is the chief occupation of Caspakians. To-mar and So-al were now about fitted for their advent into Kro-lu society and must therefore leave us, as we could not accompany them without incurring great danger ourselves and running the chance of endangering them; but each swore to be always our friend and assured us that should we need their aid at any time we had but to ask it; nor could I doubt their sincerity, since we had been so instrumental in bringing them safely upon their journey toward the Kro-lu village.

This was our last day together. In the afternoon we should separate, To-mar and So-al going directly to the Kro-lu village, while Ajor and I made a detour to avoid a conflict with the archers. The former both showed evidence of nervous apprehension as the time approached for them to make their entry into the village of their new people, and yet both were very proud and happy. They told us that they would be well received as additions to a tribe always are welcomed, and the more so as the distance from the beginning increased, the higher tribes or races being far weaker numerically than the lower. The southern end of the island fairly swarms with the Ho-lu, or apes; next above these are the Alus, who are slightly fewer in number than the Ho-lu; and again there are fewer Bolu than Alus, and fewer Sto-lu than Bo-lu. Thus it goes until the Kro-lu are fewer in number than any of the others; and here the law reverses, for the Galus outnumber the Kro-lu. As Ajor explained it to me, the reason for this is that as evolution practically ceases with the Galus, there is no less among them on this score, for even the cos-ata-lo are still considered Galus and remain with them. And Galus come up both from the west and east coasts. There are, too, fewer carnivorous reptiles at the north end of the island, and not so many of the great and ferocious members of the cat family as take their hideous toll of life among the races further south.

By now I was obtaining some idea of the Caspakian scheme of evolution, which partly accounted for the lack of young among the races I had so far seen. Coming up from the beginning, the Caspakian passes, during a single existence, through the various stages

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of evolution, or at least many of them, through which the human race has passed during the countless ages since life first stirred upon a new world; but the question which continued to puzzle me was: What creates life at the beginning, cor sva jo?

I had noticed that as we traveled northward from the Alus' country the land had gradually risen until we were now several hundred feet above the level of the inland sea. Ajor told me that the Galus country was still higher and considerably colder, which accounted for the scarcity of reptiles. The change in form and kinds of the lower animals was even more marked than the evolutionary stages of man. The diminutive ecca, or small horse, became a rough-coated and sturdy little pony in the Kro-lu country. I saw a greater number of small lions and tigers, though many of the huge ones still persisted, while the woolly mammoth was more in evidence, as were several varieties of the Labyrinthadonta.

These creatures, from which God save me, I should have expected to find further south; but for some unaccountable reason they gain their greatest bulk in the Kro-lu and Galu countries, though fortunately they are rare. I rather imagine that they are a very early life which is rapidly nearing extinction in Caspak, though wherever they are found, they constitute a menace to all forms of life.

It was mid-afternoon when To-mar and So-al bade us good-bye. We were not far from Kro-lu village; in fact, we had approached it much closer than we had intended, and now Ajor and I were to make a detour toward the sea while our companions went directly in search of the Kro-lu chief.

Ajor and I had gone perhaps a mile or two and were just about to emerge from a dense wood when I saw that ahead of us which caused me to draw back into concealment, at the same time pushing Ajor behind me. What I saw was a party of Band-lu warriors—large, fierce-appearing men. From the direction of their march I saw that they were returning to their caves, and that if we remained where we were, they would pass without discovering us.

Presently Ajor nudged me. "They have a prisoner," she whispered. "He is a Kro-lu."

And then I saw him, the first fully developed Kro-lu I had seen. He was a fine-looking savage, tall and straight with a regal carriage. To-mar was a handsome fellow; but this Kro-lu showed plainly in his every physical attribute a higher plane of evolution. While To-mar was just entering the Kro-lu sphere, this man, it seemed to me, must be close indeed to the next stage of his development, which would see him an envied Galu.

"They will kill him?" I whispered to Ajor.

"The dance of death," she replied, and I shuddered, so recently had I escaped the same fate. It seemed cruel that one who must have passed safely up through all the frightful stages of human evolution within Caspak, should die at the very foot of his goal. I raised my rifle to my shoulder and took careful aim at one of the Band-lu. If I hit him, I would hit two, for another was directly behind the first.

Ajor touched my arm. "What would you do?" she asked. "They are all our enemies."

"I am going to save him from the dance of death," I replied, "enemy or no enemy," and I squeezed the trigger. At the report, the two Bandlu lunged forward upon their faces. I handed my rifle to Ajor, and drawing my pistol, stepped out in full view of the startled party. The Band-lu did not run away as had some of the lower orders of Caspakians

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

at the sound of the rifle. Instead, the moment they saw me, they let out a series of demoniac war-cries, and raising their spears above their heads, charged me.

The Kro-lu stood silent and statuesque, watching the proceedings. He made no attempt to escape, though his feet were not bound and none of the warriors remained to guard him. There were ten of the Band-lu coming for me. I dropped three of them with my pistol as rapidly as a man might count by three, and then my rifle spoke close to my left shoulder, and another of them stumbled and rolled over and over upon the ground. Plucky little Ajor! She had never fired a shot before in all her life, though I had taught her to sight and aim and how to squeeze the trigger instead of pulling it. She had practiced these new accomplishments often, but little had I thought they would make a marksman of her so quickly.

With six of their fellows put out of the fight so easily, the remaining six sought cover behind some low bushes and commenced a council of war. I wished that they would go away, as I had no ammunition to waste, and I was fearful that should they institute another charge, some of them would reach us, for they were already quite close. Suddenly one of them rose and launched his spear. It was the most marvelous exhibition of speed I have ever witnessed. It seemed to me that he had scarce gained an upright position when the weapon was halfway upon its journey, speeding like an arrow toward Ajor. And then it was, with that little life in danger, that I made the best shot I have ever made in my life! I took no conscious aim; it was as though my subconscious mind, impelled by a stronger power even than that of self-preservation, directed my hand. Ajor was in danger! Simultaneously with the thought my pistol flew to position, a streak of incandescent powder marked the path of the bullet from its muzzle; and the spear, its point shattered, was deflected from its path. With a howl of dismay the six Band-lu rose from their shelter and raced away toward the south.

I turned toward Ajor. She was very white and wide-eyed, for the clutching fingers of death had all but seized her; but a little smile came to her lips and an expression of great pride to her eyes. "My Tom!" she said, and took my hand in hers. That was all—"My Tom!" and a pressure of the hand. Her Tom! Something stirred within my bosom. Was it exaltation or was it consternation? Impossible! I turned away almost brusquely.

"Come!" I said, and strode off toward the Kro-lu prisoner.

The Kro-lu stood watching us with stolid indifference. I presume that he expected to be killed; but if he did, he showed no outward sign of fear. His eyes, indicating his greatest interest, were fixed upon my pistol or the rifle which Ajor still carried. I cut his bonds with my knife. As I did so, an expression of surprise tinged and animated the haughty reserve of his countenance. He eyed me quizzically.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked.

"You are free," I replied. "Go home, if you wish."

"Why don't you kill me?" he inquired. "I am defenseless."

"Why should I kill you? I have risked my life and that of this young lady to save your life. Why, therefore should I now take it?" Of course, I didn't say "young lady" as there is no Caspakian equivalent for that term; but I have to allow myself considerable latitude in the translation of Caspakian conversations. To speak always of a beautiful young girl as

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

a "she" may be literal; but it seems far from gallant.

The Kro-lu concentrated his steady, level gaze upon me for at least a full minute. Then he spoke again.

"Who are you, man of strange skins?" he asked. "Your she is Galu; but you are neither Galu nor Kro-lu nor Band-lu, nor any other sort of man which I have seen before. Tell me from whence comes so mighty a warrior and so generous a foe."

"It is a long story," I replied, "but suffice it to say that I am not of Caspak. I am a stranger here, and—let this sink in—I am not a foe. I have no wish to be an enemy of any man in Caspak, with the possible exception of the Galu warrior Du-seen."

"Du-seen!" he exclaimed. "You are an enemy of Du-seen? And why?"

"Because he would harm Ajor," I replied. "You know him?"

"He cannot know him," said Ajor. "Du-seen rose from the Kro-lu long ago, taking a new name, as all do when they enter a new sphere. He cannot know him, as there is no intercourse between the Kro-lu and the Galu."

The warrior smiled. "Du-seen rose not so long ago," he said, "that I do not recall him well, and recently he has taken it upon himself to abrogate the ancient laws of Caspak; he had had intercourse with the Kro-lu. Du-seen would be chief of the Galus, and he has come to the Kro-lu for help.

Ajor was aghast. The thing was incredible. Never had Kro-lu and Galu had friendly relations; by the savage laws of Caspak they were deadly enemies, for only so can the several races maintain their individuality.

"Will the Kro-lu join him?" asked Ajor. "Will they invade the country of Jor my father?"

"The younger Kro-lu favor the plan," replied the warrior, "since they believe they will thus become Galus immediately. They hope to span the long years of change through which they must pass in the ordinary course of events and at a single stride become Galus. We of the older Kro-lu tell them that though they occupy the land of the Galu and wear the skins and ornaments of the golden people, still they will not be Galus till the time arrives that they are ripe to rise. We also tell them that even then they will never become a true Galu race, since there will still be those among them who can never rise. It is all right to raid the Galu country occasionally for plunder, as our people do; but to attempt to conquer it and hold it is madness. For my part, I have been content to wait until the call came to me. I feel that it cannot now be long."

"What is your name?" asked Ajor.

"Chal-az," replied the man.

"You are chief of the Kro-lu?" Ajor continued.

"No, it is Al-tan who is chief of the Kro-lu of the east," answered Chal-az.

"And he is against this plan to invade my father's country?"

"Unfortunately he is rather in favor of it," replied the man, "since he has about come to the conclusion that he is batu. He has been chief ever since, before I came up from the Band-lu, and I can see no change in him in all those years. In fact, he still appears to be more Band-lu than Kro-lu. However, he is a good chief and a mighty warrior, and if Du-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seen persuades him to his cause, the Galus may find themselves under a Kro-lu chieftain before long—Du-seen as well as the others, for Al-tan would never consent to occupy a subordinate position, and once he plants a victorious foot in Galu, he will not withdraw it without a struggle.”

I asked them what batu meant, as I had not before heard the word. Literally translated, it is equivalent to through, finished, done-for, as applied to an individual's evolutionary progress in Caspak, and with this information was developed the interesting fact that not every individual is capable of rising through every stage to that of Galu. Some never progress beyond the Alu stage; others stop as Bo-lu, as Sto-lu, as Bandlu or as Kro-lu. The Ho-lu of the first generation may rise to become Alus; the Alus of the second generation may become Bo-lu, while it requires three generations of Bo-lu to become Band-lu, and so on until Kro-lu's parent on one side must be of the sixth generation.

It was not entirely plain to me even with this explanation, since I couldn't understand how there could be different generations of peoples who apparently had no offspring. Yet I was commencing to get a slight glimmer of the strange laws which govern propagation and evolution in this weird land. Already I knew that the warm pools which always lie close to every tribal abiding-place were closely linked with the Caspakian scheme of evolution, and that the daily immersion of the females in the greenish slimy water was in response to some natural law, since neither pleasure nor cleanliness could be derived from what seemed almost a religious rite. Yet I was still at sea; nor, seemingly, could Ajor enlighten me, since she was compelled to use words which I could not understand and which it was impossible for her to explain the meanings of.

As we stood talking, we were suddenly startled by a commotion in the bushes and among the boles of the trees surrounding us, and simultaneously a hundred Kro-lu warriors appeared in a rough circle about us. They greeted Chal-az with a volley of questions as they approached slowly from all sides, their heavy bows fitted with long, sharp arrows.

Upon Ajor and me they looked with covetousness in the one instance and suspicion in the other; but after they had heard Chal-az's story, their attitude was more friendly. A huge savage did all the talking. He was a mountain of a man, yet perfectly proportioned.

“This is Al-tan the chief,” said Chal-az by way of introduction. Then he told something of my story, and Al-tan asked me many questions of the land from which I came. The warriors crowded around close to hear my replies, and there were many expressions of incredulity as I spoke of what was to them another world, of the yacht which had brought me over vast waters, and of the plane that had borne me Jo-oo-like over the summit of the barrier-cliffs. It was the mention of the hydroaeroplane which precipitated the first outspoken skepticism, and then Ajor came to my defense.

“I saw it with my own eyes!” she exclaimed. “I saw him flying through the air in battle with a Jo-oo. The Alus were chasing me, and they saw and ran away.”

“Whose is this she?” demanded Al-tan suddenly, his eyes fixed fiercely upon Ajor.

For a moment there was silence. Ajor looked up at me, a hurt and questioning expression on her face. “Whose she is this?” repeated Al-tan.

“She is mine,” I replied, though what force it was that impelled me to say it I could

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

not have told; but an instant later I was glad that I had spoken the words, for the reward of Ajor's proud and happy face was reward indeed.

Al-tan eyed her for several minutes and then turned to me. "Can you keep her?" he asked, just the tinge of a sneer upon his face.

I laid my palm upon the grip of my pistol and answered that I could. He saw the move, glanced at the butt of the automatic where it protruded from its holster, and smiled. Then he turned and raising his great bow, fitted an arrow and drew the shaft far back. His warriors, supercilious smiles upon their faces, stood silently watching him. His bow was the longest and the heaviest among them all. A mighty man indeed must he be to bend it; yet Al-tan drew the shaft back until the stone point touched his left forefinger, and he did it with consummate ease. Then he raised the shaft to the level of his right eye, held it there for an instant and released it.

When the arrow stopped, half its length protruded from the opposite side of a six-inch tree fifty feet away. Al-tan and his warriors turned toward me with expressions of immense satisfaction upon their faces, and then, apparently for Ajor's benefit, the chieftain swaggered to and fro a couple of times, swinging his great arms and his bulky shoulders for all the world like a drunken prizefighter at a beach dance hall.

I saw that some reply was necessary, and so in a single motion, I drew my gun, dropped it on the still quivering arrow and pulled the trigger. At the sound of the report, the Kro-lu leaped back and raised their weapons; but as I was smiling, they took heart and lowered them again, following my eyes to the tree; the shaft of their chief was gone, and through the bole was a little round hole marking the path of my bullet. It was a good shot if I do say it myself, "as shouldn't" but necessity must have guided that bullet; I simply had to make a good shot, that I might immediately establish my position among those savage and warlike Caspakians of the sixth sphere. That it had its effect was immediately noticeable, but I am none too sure that it helped my cause with Al-tan. Whereas he might have condescended to tolerate me as a harmless and interesting curiosity, he now, by the change in his expression, appeared to consider me in a new and unfavorable light. Nor can I wonder, knowing this type as I did, for had I not made him ridiculous in the eyes of his warriors, beating him at his own game? What king, savage or civilized, could condone such impudence? Seeing his black scowls, I deemed it expedient, especially on Ajor's account, to terminate the interview and continue upon our way; but when I would have done so, Al-tan detained us with a gesture, and his warriors pressed around us.

"What is the meaning of this?" I demanded, and before Al-tan could reply, Chal-az raised his voice in our behalf.

"Is this the gratitude of a Kro-lu chieftain, Al-tan," he asked, "to one who has served you by saving one of your warriors from the enemy—saving him from the death dance of the Band-lu?"

Al-tan was silent for a moment, and then his brow cleared, and the faint imitation of a pleasant expression struggled for existence as he said: "The stranger will not be harmed. I wished only to detain him that he may be feasted tonight in the village of Al-tan the Kro-lu. In the morning he may go his way. Al-tan will not hinder him."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I was not entirely reassured; but I wanted to see the interior of the Kro-lu village, and anyway I knew that if Al-tan intended treachery I would be no more in his power in the morning than I now was—in fact, during the night I might find opportunity to escape with Ajor, while at the instant neither of us could hope to escape unscathed from the encircling warriors. Therefore, in order to disarm him of any thought that I might entertain suspicion as to his sincerity, I promptly and courteously accepted his invitation. His satisfaction was evident, and as we set off toward his village, he walked beside me, asking many questions as to the country from which I came, its peoples and their customs. He seemed much mystified by the fact that we could walk abroad by day or night without fear of being devoured by wild beasts or savage reptiles, and when I told him of the great armies which we maintained, his simple mind could not grasp the fact that they existed solely for the slaughtering of human beings.

“I am glad,” he said, “that I do not dwell in your country among such savage peoples. Here, in Caspak, men fight with men when they meet—men of different races—but their weapons are first for the slaying of beasts in the chase and in defense. We do not fashion weapons solely for the killing of man as do your peoples. Your country must indeed be a savage country, from which you are fortunate to have escaped to the peace and security of Caspak.”

Here was a new and refreshing viewpoint; nor could I take exception to it after what I had told Altan of the great war which had been raging in Europe for over two years before I left home.

On the march to the Kro-lu village we were continually stalked by innumerable beasts of prey, and three times we were attacked by frightful creatures; but Altan took it all as a matter of course, rushing forward with raised spear or sending a heavy shaft into the body of the attacker and then returning to our conversation as though no interruption had occurred. Twice were members of his band mauled, and one was killed by a huge and bellicose rhinoceros; but the instant the action was over, it was as though it never had occurred. The dead man was stripped of his belongings and left where he had died; the carnivora would take care of his burial. The trophies that these Kro-lu left to the meat-eaters would have turned an English big-game hunter green with envy. They did, it is true, cut all the edible parts from the rhino and carry them home; but already they were pretty well weighted down with the spoils of the chase, and only the fact that they are particularly fond of rhino-meat caused them to do so.

They left the hide on the pieces they selected, as they use it for sandals, shield-covers, the hilts of their knives and various other purposes where tough hide is desirable. I was much interested in their shields, especially after I saw one used in defense against the attack of a saber-tooth tiger. The huge creature had charged us without warning from a clump of dense bushes where it was lying up after eating. It was met with an avalanche of spears, some of which passed entirely through its body, with such force were they hurled. The charge was from a very short distance, requiring the use of the spear rather than the bow and arrow; but after the launching of the spears, the men not directly in the path of the charge sent bolt after bolt into the great carcass with almost incredible rapidity. The beast, screaming with pain and rage, bore down upon Chal-az while I stood helpless with my rifle for fear of hitting one of the warriors who were closing in upon it.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

But Chal-az was ready. Throwing aside his bow, he crouched behind his large oval shield, in the center of which was a hole about six inches in diameter. The shield was held by tight loops to his left arm, while in his right hand he grasped his heavy knife. Bristling with spears and arrows, the great cat hurled itself upon the shield, and down went Chal-az upon his back with the shield entirely covering him. The tiger clawed and bit at the heavy rhinoceros hide with which the shield was faced, while Chal-az, through the round hole in the shield's center, plunged his blade repeatedly into the vitals of the savage animal. Doubtless the battle would have gone to Chalaz even though I had not interfered; but the moment that I saw a clean opening, with no Kro-lu beyond, I raised my rifle and killed the beast.

When Chal-az arose, he glanced at the sky and remarked that it looked like rain. The others already had resumed the march toward the village. The incident was closed. For some unaccountable reason the whole thing reminded me of a friend who once shot a cat in his backyard. For three weeks he talked of nothing else.

It was almost dark when we reached the village—a large palisaded enclosure of several hundred leaf-thatched huts set in groups of from two to seven. The huts were hexagonal in form, and where grouped were joined so that they resembled the cells of a beehive. One hut meant a warrior and his mate, and each additional hut in a group indicated an additional female. The palisade which surrounded the village was of logs set close together and woven into a solid wall with tough creepers which were planted at their base and trained to weave in and out to bind the logs together. The logs slanted outward at an angle of about thirty degrees, in which position they were held by shorter logs embedded in the ground at right angles to them and with their upper ends supporting the longer pieces a trifle above their centers of equilibrium. Along the top of the palisade sharpened stakes had been driven at all sorts of angles.

The only opening into the inclosure was through a small aperture three feet wide and three feet high, which was closed from the inside by logs about six feet long laid horizontally, one upon another, between the inside face of the palisade and two other braced logs which paralleled the face of the wall upon the inside.

As we entered the village, we were greeted by a not unfriendly crowd of curious warriors and women, to whom Chal-az generously explained the service we had rendered him, whereupon they showered us with the most well-meant attentions, for Chal-az, it seemed, was a most popular member of the tribe.

Necklaces of lion and tiger-teeth, bits of dried meat, finely tanned hides and earthen pots, beautifully decorated, they thrust upon us until we were loaded down, and all the while Al-tan glared balefully upon us, seemingly jealous of the attentions heaped upon us because we had served Chal-az.

At last we reached a hut that they set apart for us, and there we cooked our meat and some vegetables the women brought us, and had milk from cows—the first I had had in Caspak—and cheese from the milk of wild goats, with honey and thin bread made from wheat flour of their own grinding, and grapes and the fermented juice of grapes. It was quite the most wonderful meal I had eaten since I quit the Toreador and Bowen J. Tyler's colored chef, who could make pork-chops taste like chicken, and chicken taste like heaven.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

After dinner I rolled a cigarette and stretched myself at ease upon a pile of furs before the doorway, with Ajor's head pillowed in my lap and a feeling of great content pervading me. It was the first time since my plane had topped the barrier-cliffs of Caspak that I had felt any sense of peace or security. My hand wandered to the velvet cheek of the girl I had claimed as mine, and to her luxuriant hair and the golden fillet which bound it close to her shapely head. Her slender fingers groping upward sought mine and drew them to her lips, and then I gathered her in my arms and crushed her to me, smothering her mouth with a long, long kiss. It was the first time that passion had tinged my intercourse with Ajor. We were alone, and the hut was ours until morning.

But now from beyond the palisade in the direction of the main gate came the hallooming of men and the answering calls and queries of the guard. We listened. Returning hunters, no doubt. We heard them enter the village amidst the barking dogs. I have forgotten to mention the dogs of Kro-lu. The village swarmed with them, gaunt, wolflike creatures that guarded the herd by day when it grazed without the palisade, ten dogs to a cow. By night the cows were herded in an outer inclosure roofed against the onslaughts of the carnivorous cats; and the dogs, with the exception of a few, were brought into the village; these few well-tested brutes remained with the herd. During the day they fed plentifully upon the beasts of prey which they killed in protection of the herd, so that their keep amounted to nothing at all.

Shortly after the commotion at the gate had subsided, Ajor and I arose to enter the hut, and at the same time a warrior appeared from one of the twisted alleys which, lying between the irregularly placed huts and groups of huts, form the streets of the Kro-lu village. The fellow halted before us and addressed me, saying that Al-tan desired my presence at his hut. The wording of the invitation and the manner of the messenger threw me entirely off my guard, so cordial was the one and respectful the other, and the result was that I went willingly, telling Ajor that I would return presently. I had laid my arms and ammunition aside as soon as we had taken over the hut, and I left them with Ajor now, as I had noticed that aside from their hunting-knives the men of Kro-lu bore no weapons about the village streets. There was an atmosphere of peace and security within that village that I had not hoped to experience within Caspak, and after what I had passed through, it must have cast a numbing spell over my faculties of judgment and reason. I had eaten of the lotus-flower of safety; dangers no longer threatened for they had ceased to be.

The messenger led me through the labyrinthine alleys to an open plaza near the center of the village. At one end of this plaza was a long hut, much the largest that I had yet seen, before the door of which were many warriors. I could see that the interior was lighted and that a great number of men were gathered within. The dogs about the plaza were as thick as fleas, and those I approached closely evinced a strong desire to devour me, their noses evidently apprising them of the fact that I was of an alien race, since they paid no attention whatever to my companion. Once inside the council-hut, for such it appeared to be, I found a large concourse of warriors seated, or rather squatted, around the floor. At one end of the oval space which the warriors left down the center of the room stood Al-tan and another warrior whom I immediately recognized as a Galu, and then I saw that there were many Galus present. About the walls were a number of flam-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing torches stuck in holes in a clay plaster which evidently served the purpose of preventing the inflammable wood and grasses of which the hut was composed from being ignited by the flames. Lying about among the warriors or wandering restlessly to and fro were a number of savage dogs.

The warriors eyed me curiously as I entered, especially the Galus, and then I was conducted into the center of the group and led forward toward Al-tan. As I advanced I felt one of the dogs sniffing at my heels, and of a sudden a great brute leaped upon my back. As I turned to thrust it aside before its fangs found a hold upon me, I beheld a huge Airedale leaping frantically about me. The grinning jaws, the half-closed eyes, the back-laid ears spoke to me louder than might the words of man that here was no savage enemy but a joyous friend, and then I recognized him, and fell to one knee and put my arms about his neck while he whined and cried with joy. It was Nobs, dear old Nobs. Bowen Tyler's Nobs, who had loved me next to his master.

"Where is the master of this dog?" I asked, turning toward Al-tan.

The chieftain inclined his head toward the Galu standing at his side. "He belongs to Du-seen the Galu," he replied.

"He belongs to Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., of Santa Monica," I retorted, "and I want to know where his master is."

The Galu shrugged. "The dog is mine," he said. "He came to me cor-sva-jo, and he is unlike any dog in Caspak, being kind and docile and yet a killer when aroused. I would not part with him. I do not know the man of whom you speak."

So this was Du-seen! This was the man from whom Ajor had fled. I wondered if he knew that she was here. I wondered if they had sent for me because of her; but after they had commenced to question me, my mind was relieved; they did not mention Ajor. Their interest seemed centered upon the strange world from which I had come, my journey to Caspak and my intentions now that I had arrived. I answered them frankly as I had nothing to conceal and assured them that my only wish was to find my friends and return to my own country. In the Galu Du-seen and his warriors I saw something of the explanation of the term "golden race" which is applied to them, for their ornaments and weapons were either wholly of beaten gold or heavily decorated with the precious metal. They were a very imposing set of men—tall and straight and handsome. About their heads were bands of gold like that which Ajor wore, and from their left shoulders depended the leopard-tails of the Galus. In addition to the deerskin tunic which constituted the major portion of their apparel, each carried a light blanket of barbaric yet beautiful design—the first evidence of weaving I had seen in Caspak. Ajor had had no blanket, having lost it during her flight from the attentions of Du-seen; nor was she so heavily incrustured with gold as these male members of her tribe.

The audience must have lasted fully an hour when Al-tan signified that I might return to my hut. All the time Nobs had lain quietly at my feet; but the instant that I turned to leave, he was up and after me. Duseen called to him; but the terrier never even so much as looked in his direction. I had almost reached the doorway leading from the council-hall when Al-tan rose and called after me. "Stop!" he shouted. "Stop, stranger! The beast of Du-seen the Galu follows you."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"The dog is not Du-seen's," I replied. "He belongs to my friend, as I told you, and he prefers to stay with me until his master is found." And I turned again to resume my way. I had taken but a few steps when I heard a commotion behind me, and at the same moment a man leaned close and whispered "Kazar!" close to my ear—kazar, the Caspakian equivalent of beware. It was To-mar. As he spoke, he turned quickly away as though loath to have others see that he knew me, and at the same instant I wheeled to discover Du-seen striding rapidly after me. Al-tan followed him, and it was evident that both were angry.

Du-seen, a weapon half drawn, approached truculently. "The beast is mine," he reiterated. "Would you steal him?"

"He is not yours nor mine," I replied, "and I am not stealing him. If he wishes to follow you, he may; I will not interfere; but if he wishes to follow me, he shall; nor shall you prevent." I turned to Al-tan. "Is not that fair?" I demanded. "Let the dog choose his master."

Du-seen, without waiting for Al-tan's reply, reached for Nobs and grasped him by the scruff of the neck. I did not interfere, for I guessed what would happen; and it did. With a savage growl Nobs turned like lightning upon the Galu, wrenched loose from his hold and leaped for his throat. The man stepped back and warded off the first attack with a heavy blow of his fist, immediately drawing his knife with which to meet the Airedale's return. And Nobs would have returned, all right, had not I spoken to him. In a low voice I called him to heel. For just an instant he hesitated, standing there trembling and with bared fangs, glaring at his foe; but he was well trained and had been out with me quite as much as he had with Bowen—in fact, I had had most to do with his early training; then he walked slowly and very stiff-legged to his place behind me.

Du-seen, red with rage, would have had it out with the two of us had not Al-tan drawn him to one side and whispered in his ear—upon which, with a grunt, the Galu walked straight back to the opposite end of the hall, while Nobs and I continued upon our way toward the hut and Ajor. As we passed out into the village plaza, I saw Chal-az—we were so close to one another that I could have reached out and touched him—and our eyes met; but though I greeted him pleasantly and paused to speak to him, he brushed past me without a sign of recognition. I was puzzled at his behavior, and then I recalled that To-mar, though he had warned me, had appeared not to wish to seem friendly with me. I could not understand their attitude, and was trying to puzzle out some sort of explanation, when the matter was suddenly driven from my mind by the report of a firearm. Instantly I broke into a run, my brain in a whirl of forebodings, for the only firearms in the Kro-lu country were those I had left in the hut with Ajor.

That she was in danger I could not but fear, as she was now something of an adept in the handling of both the pistol and rifle, a fact which largely eliminated the chance that the shot had come from an accidentally discharged firearm. When I left the hut, I had felt that she and I were safe among friends; no thought of danger was in my mind; but since my audience with Al-tan, the presence and bearing of Duseen and the strange attitude of both To-mar and Chal-az had each contributed toward arousing my suspicions, and now I ran along the narrow, winding alleys of the Kro-lu village with my heart fairly in my mouth.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I am endowed with an excellent sense of direction, which has been greatly perfected by the years I have spent in the mountains and upon the plains and deserts of my native state, so that it was with little or no difficulty that I found my way back to the hut in which I had left Ajor. As I entered the doorway, I called her name aloud. There was no response. I drew a box of matches from my pocket and struck a light and as the flame flared up, a half-dozen brawny warriors leaped upon me from as many directions; but even in the brief instant that the flare lasted, I saw that Ajor was not within the hut, and that my arms and ammunition had been removed.

As the six men leaped upon me, an angry growl burst from behind them. I had forgotten Nobs. Like a demon of hate he sprang among those Kro-lu fighting-men, tearing, rending, ripping with his long tusks and his mighty jaws. They had me down in an instant, and it goes without saying that the six of them could have kept me there had it not been for Nobs; but while I was struggling to throw them off, Nobs was springing first upon one and then upon another of them until they were so put to it to preserve their hides and their lives from him that they could give me only a small part of their attention. One of them was assiduously attempting to strike me on the head with his stone hatchet; but I caught his arm and at the same time turned over upon my belly, after which it took but an instant to get my feet under me and rise suddenly.

As I did so, I kept a grip upon the man's arm, carrying it over one shoulder. Then I leaned suddenly forward and hurled my antagonist over my head to a hasty fall at the opposite side of the hut. In the dim light of the interior I saw that Nobs had already accounted for one of the others—one who lay very quiet upon the floor—while the four remaining upon their feet were striking at him with knives and hatchets.

Running to one side of the man I had just put out of the fighting, I seized his hatchet and knife, and in another moment was in the thick of the argument. I was no match for these savage warriors with their own weapons and would soon have gone down to ignominious defeat and death had it not been for Nobs, who alone was a match for the four of them. I never saw any creature so quick upon its feet as was that great Airedale, nor such frightful ferocity as he manifested in his attacks. It was as much the latter as the former which contributed to the undoing of our enemies, who, accustomed though they were to the ferocity of terrible creatures, seemed awed by the sight of this strange beast from another world battling at the side of his equally strange master. Yet they were no cowards, and only by teamwork did Nobs and I overcome them at last. We would rush for a man, simultaneously, and as Nobs leaped for him upon one side, I would strike at his head with the stone hatchet from the other.

As the last man went down, I heard the running of many feet approaching us from the direction of the plaza. To be captured now would mean death; yet I could not attempt to leave the village without first ascertaining the whereabouts of Ajor and releasing her if she were held a captive. That I could escape the village I was not at all sure; but of one thing I was positive; that it would do neither Ajor nor myself any service to remain where I was and be captured; so with Nobs, bloody but happy, following at heel, I turned down the first alley and slunk away in the direction of the northern end of the village.

Friendless and alone, hunted through the dark labyrinths of this savage community, I seldom have felt more helpless than at that moment; yet far transcending any fear which

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

I may have felt for my own safety was my concern for that of Ajor. What fate had befallen her? Where was she, and in whose power? That I should live to learn the answers to these queries I doubted; but that I should face death gladly in the attempt—of that I was certain. And why? With all my concern for the welfare of my friends who had accompanied me to Caprona, and of my best friend of all, Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., I never yet had experienced the almost paralyzing fear for the safety of any other creature which now threw me alternately into a fever of despair and into a cold sweat of apprehension as my mind dwelt upon the fate on one bit of half-savage femininity of whose very existence even I had not dreamed a few short weeks before.

What was this hold she had upon me? Was I bewitched, that my mind refused to function sanely, and that judgment and reason were dethroned by some mad sentiment which I steadfastly refused to believe was love? I had never been in love. I was not in love now—the very thought was preposterous. How could I, Thomas Billings, the right-hand man of the late Bowen J. Tyler, Sr., one of America's foremost captains of industry and the greatest man in California, be in love with a—a—the word stuck in my throat; yet by my own American standards Ajor could be nothing else; at home, for all her beauty, for all her delicately tinted skin, little Ajor by her apparel, by the habits and customs and manners of her people, by her life, would have been classed a squaw. Tom Billings in love with a squaw! I shuddered at the thought.

And then there came to my mind, in a sudden, brilliant flash upon the screen of recollection the picture of Ajor as I had last seen her, and I lived again the delicious moment in which we had clung to one another, lips smothering lips, as I left her to go to the council hall of Al-tan; and I could have kicked myself for the snob and the cad that my thoughts had proven me—me, who had always prided myself that I was neither the one nor the other!

These things ran through my mind as Nobs and I made our way through the dark village, the voices and footsteps of those who sought us still in our ears. These and many other things, nor could I escape the incontrovertible fact that the little figure round which my recollections and my hopes entwined themselves was that of Ajor—beloved barbarian! My reveries were broken in upon by a hoarse whisper from the black interior of a hut past which we were making our way. My name was called in a low voice, and a man stepped out beside me as I halted with raised knife. It was Chal-az.

"Quick!" he warned. "In here! It is my hut, and they will not search it."

I hesitated, recalled his attitude of a few minutes before; and as though he had read my thoughts, he said quickly: "I could not speak to you in the plaza without danger of arousing suspicions which would prevent me aiding you later, for word had gone out that Al-tan had turned against you and would destroy you—this was after Du-seen the Galu arrived."

I followed him into the hut, and with Nobs at our heels we passed through several chambers into a remote and windowless apartment where a small lamp sputtered in its unequal battle with the inky darkness. A hole in the roof permitted the smoke from burning oil egress; yet the atmosphere was far from lucid. Here Chal-az motioned me to a seat upon a furry hide spread upon the earthen floor.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I am your friend," he said. "You saved my life; and I am no ingrate as is the batu Al-tan. I will serve you, and there are others here who will serve you against Al-tan and this renegade Galu, Du-seen."

"But where is Ajor?" I asked, for I cared little for my own safety while she was in danger.

"Ajor is safe, too," he answered. "We learned the designs of Al-tan and Du-seen. The latter, learning that Ajor was here, demanded her; and Al-tan promised that he should have her; but when the warriors went to get her To-mar went with them. Ajor tried to defend herself. She killed one of the warriors, and then To-mar picked her up in his arms when the others had taken her weapons from her. He told the others to look after the wounded man, who was really already dead, and to seize you upon your return, and that he, To-mar, would bear Ajor to Al-tan; but instead of bearing her to Al-tan, he took her to his own hut, where she now is with So-al, To-mar's she. It all happened very quickly. To-mar and I were in the council-hut when Du-seen attempted to take the dog from you. I was seeking To-mar for this work. He ran out immediately and accompanied the warriors to your hut while I remained to watch what went on within the council-hut and to aid you if you needed aid. What has happened since you know."

I thanked him for his loyalty and then asked him to take me to Ajor; but he said that it could not be done, as the village streets were filled with searchers. In fact, we could hear them passing to and fro among the huts, making inquiries, and at last Chalaz thought it best to go to the doorway of his dwelling, which consisted of many huts joined together, lest they enter and search.

Chal-az was absent for a long time—several hours which seemed an eternity to me. All sounds of pursuit had long since ceased, and I was becoming uneasy because of his protracted absence when I heard him returning through the other apartments of his dwelling. He was perturbed when he entered that in which I awaited him, and I saw a worried expression upon his face.

"What is wrong?" I asked. "Have they found Ajor?"

"No," he replied; "but Ajor has gone. She learned that you had escaped them and was told that you had left the village, believing that she had escaped too.

So-al could not detain her. She made her way out over the top of the palisade, armed with only her knife."

"Then I must go," I said, rising. Nobs rose and shook himself. He had been dead asleep when I spoke.

"Yes," agreed Chal-az, "you must go at once. It is almost dawn. Du-seen leaves at daylight to search for her." He leaned close to my ear and whispered: "There are many to follow and help you. Al-tan has agreed to aid Du-seen against the Galus of Jor; but there are many of us who have combined to rise against Al-tan and prevent this ruthless desecration of the laws and customs of the Kro-lu and of Caspak. We will rise as Luata has ordained that we shall rise, and only thus. No batu may win to the estate of a Galu by treachery and force of arms while Chal-az lives and may wield a heavy blow and a sharp spear with true Kro-lus at his back!"

"I hope that I may live to aid you," I replied. "If I had my weapons and my ammuni-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tion, I could do much. Do you know where they are?" "No," he said, "they have disappeared." And then: "Wait! You cannot go forth half armed, and garbed as you are. You are going into the Galu country, and you must go as a Galu. Come!" And without waiting for a reply, he led me into another apartment, or to be more explicit, another of the several huts which formed his cellular dwelling.

Here was a pile of skins, weapons, and ornaments. "Remove your strange apparel," said Chalaz, "and I will fit you out as a true Galu. I have slain several of them in the raids of my early days as a Kro-lu, and here are their trappings."

I saw the wisdom of his suggestion, and as my clothes were by now so ragged as to but half conceal my nakedness, I had no regrets in laying them aside. Stripped to the skin, I donned the red-deerskin tunic, the leopard-tail, the golden fillet, armlets and leg-ornaments of a Galu, with the belt, scabbard and knife, the shield, spear, bow and arrow and the long rope which I learned now for the first time is the distinctive weapon of the Galu warrior. It is a rawhide rope, not dissimilar to those of the Western plains and cow-camps of my youth. The honda is a golden oval and accurate weight for the throwing of the noose. This heavy honda, Chal-az explained, is used as a weapon, being thrown with great force and accuracy at an enemy and then coiled in for another cast. In hunting and in battle, they use both the noose and the honda. If several warriors surround a single foeman or quarry, they rope it with the noose from several sides; but a single warrior against a lone antagonist will attempt to brain his foe with the metal oval.

I could not have been more pleased with any weapon, short of a rifle, which he could have found for me, since I have been adept with the rope from early childhood; but I must confess that I was less favorably inclined toward my apparel. In so far as the sensation was concerned, I might as well have been entirely naked, so short and light was the tunic. When I asked Chal-az for the Caspakian name for rope, he told me ga, and for the first time I understood the derivation of the word Galu, which means ropeman.

Entirely outfitted I would not have known myself, so strange was my garb and my armament. Upon my back were slung my bow, arrows, shield, and short spear; from the center of my girdle depended my knife; at my right hip was my stone hatchet; and at my left hung the coils of my long rope. By reaching my right hand over my left shoulder, I could seize the spear or arrows; my left hand could find my bow over my right shoulder, while a veritable contortionist-act was necessary to place my shield in front of me and upon my left arm. The shield, long and oval, is utilized more as back-armor than as a defense against frontal attack, for the close-set armlets of gold upon the left forearm are principally depended upon to ward off knife, spear, hatchet, or arrow from in front; but against the greater carnivora and the attacks of several human antagonists, the shield is utilized to its best advantage and carried by loops upon the left arm.

Fully equipped, except for a blanket, I followed Chal-az from his domicile into the dark and deserted alleys of Kro-lu. Silently we crept along, Nobs silent at heel, toward the nearest portion of the palisade. Here Chal-az bade me farewell, telling me that he hoped to see me soon among the Galus, as he felt that "the call soon would come" to him. I thanked him for his loyal assistance and promised that whether I reached the Galu country or not, I should always stand ready to repay his kindness to me, and that he could count on me in the revolution against Al-tan.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

To run up the inclined surface of the palisade and drop to the ground outside was the work of but a moment, or would have been but for Nobs. I had to put my rope about him after we reached the top, lift him over the sharpened stakes and lower him upon the outside. To find Ajor in the unknown country to the north seemed rather hopeless; yet I could do no less than try, praying in the meanwhile that she would come through unscathed and in safety to her father.

As Nobs and I swung along in the growing light of the coming day, I was impressed by the lessening numbers of savage beasts the farther north I traveled. With the decrease among the carnivora, the herbivora increased in quantity, though anywhere in Caspak they are sufficiently plentiful to furnish ample food for the meateaters of each locality. The wild cattle, antelope, deer, and horses I passed showed changes in evolution from their cousins farther south. The kine were smaller and less shaggy, the horses larger. North of the Kro-lu village I saw a small band of the latter of about the size of those of our old Western plains—such as the Indians bred in former days and to a lesser extent even now. They were fat and sleek, and I looked upon them with covetous eyes and with thoughts that any old cowpuncher may well imagine I might entertain after having hoofed it for weeks; but they were wary, scarce permitting me to approach within bow-and-arrow range, much less within roping-distance; yet I still had hopes which I never discarded.

Twice before noon we were stalked and charged by man-eaters; but even though I was without firearms, I still had ample protection in Nobs, who evidently had learned something of Caspakian hunt rules under the tutelage of Du-seen or some other Galu, and of course a great deal more by experience. He always was on the alert for dangerous foes, invariably warning me by low growls of the approach of a large carnivorous animal long before I could either see or hear it, and then when the thing appeared, he would run snapping at its heels, drawing the charge away from me until I found safety in some tree; yet never did the wily Nobs take an unnecessary chance of a mauling. He would dart in and away so quickly that not even the lightning-like movements of the great cats could reach him. I have seen him tantalize them thus until they fairly screamed in rage.

The greatest inconvenience the hunters caused me was the delay, for they have a nasty habit of keeping one treed for an hour or more if balked in their designs; but at last we came in sight of a line of cliffs running east and west across our path as far as the eye could see in either direction, and I knew that we reached the natural boundary which marks the line between the Kro-lu and Galu countries. The southern face of these cliffs loomed high and forbidding, rising to an altitude of some two hundred feet, sheer and precipitous, without a break that the eye could perceive. How I was to find a crossing I could not guess. Whether to search to the east toward the still loftier barrier-cliffs fronting upon the ocean, or westward in the direction of the inland sea was a question which baffled me. Were there many passes or only one? I had no way of knowing. I could but trust to chance. It never occurred to me that Nobs had made the crossing at least once, possibly a greater number of times, and that he might lead me to the pass; and so it was with no idea of assistance that I appealed to him as a man alone with a dumb brute so often does.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Nobs," I said, "how the devil are we going to cross those cliffs?"

I do not say that he understood me, even though I realize that an Airedale is a mighty intelligent dog; but I do swear that he seemed to understand me, for he wheeled about, barking joyously and trotted off toward the west; and when I didn't follow him, he ran back to me barking furiously, and at last taking hold of the calf of my leg in an effort to pull me along in the direction he wished me to go. Now, as my legs were naked and Nobs' jaws are much more powerful than he realizes, I gave in and followed him, for I knew that I might as well go west as east, as far as any knowledge I had of the correct direction went.

We followed the base of the cliffs for a considerable distance. The ground was rolling and tree-dotted and covered with grazing animals, alone, in pairs and in herds—a motley aggregation of the modern and extinct herbivore of the world. A huge woolly mastodon stood swaying to and fro in the shade of a giant fern—a mighty bull with enormous upcurving tusks. Near him grazed an aurochs bull with a cow and a calf, close beside a lone rhinoceros asleep in a dust-hole. Deer, antelope, bison, horses, sheep, and goats were all in sight at the same time, and at a little distance a great megatherium reared up on its huge tail and massive hind feet to tear the leaves from a tall tree. The forgotten past rubbed flanks with the present—while Tom Billings, modern of the moderns, passed in the garb of pre-Glacial man, and before him trotted a creature of a breed scarce sixty years old. Nobs was a parvenu; but it failed to worry him.

As we neared the inland sea we saw more flying reptiles and several great amphibians, but none of them attacked us. As we were topping a rise in the middle of the afternoon, I saw something that brought me to a sudden stop. Calling Nobs in a whisper, I cautioned him to silence and kept him at heel while I threw myself flat and watched, from behind a sheltering shrub, a body of warriors approaching the cliff from the south. I could see that they were Galus, and I guessed that Du-seen led them. They had taken a shorter route to the pass and so had overhauled me. I could see them plainly, for they were no great distance away, and saw with relief that Ajor was not with them.

The cliffs before them were broken and ragged, those coming from the east overlapping the cliffs from the west. Into the defile formed by this overlapping the party filed. I could see them climbing upward for a few minutes, and then they disappeared from view. When the last of them had passed from sight, I rose and bent my steps in the direction of the pass—the same pass toward which Nobs had evidently been leading me. I went warily as I approached it, for fear the party might have halted to rest. If they hadn't halted, I had no fear of being discovered, for I had seen that the Galus marched without point, flankers or rear guard; and when I reached the pass and saw a narrow, one-man trail leading upward at a stiff angle, I wished that I were chief of the Galus for a few weeks. A dozen men could hold off forever in that narrow pass all the hordes which might be brought up from the south; yet there it lay entirely unguarded.

The Galus might be a great people in Caspak; but they were pitifully inefficient in even the simpler forms of military tactics. I was surprised that even a man of the Stone Age should be so lacking in military perspicacity. Du-seen dropped far below par in my estimation as I saw the slovenly formation of his troop as it passed through an enemy country and entered the domain of the chief against whom he had risen in revolt; but Du-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seen must have known Jor the chief and known that Jor would not be waiting for him at the pass. Nevertheless he took unwarranted chances. With one squad of a home-guard company I could have conquered Caspak.

Nobs and I followed to the summit of the pass, and there we saw the party defiling into the Galu country, the level of which was not, on an average, over fifty feet below the summit of the cliffs and about a hundred and fifty feet above the adjacent Kro-lu domain. Immediately the landscape changed. The trees, the flowers and the shrubs were of a hardier type, and I realized that at night the Galu blanket might be almost a necessity. Acacia and eucalyptus predominated among the trees; yet there were ash and oak and even pine and fir and hemlock. The tree-life was riotous. The forests were dense and peopled by enormous trees. From the summit of the cliff I could see forests rising hundreds of feet above the level upon which I stood, and even at the distance they were from me I realized that the boles were of gigantic size.

At last I had come to the Galu country. Though not conceived in Caspak, I had indeed come up cor-sva jo—from the beginning I had come up through the hideous horrors of the lower Caspakian spheres of evolution, and I could not but feel something of the elation and pride which had filled To-mar and So-al when they realized that the call had come to them and they were about to rise from the estate of Band-lus to that of Kro-lus. I was glad that I was not batu.

But where was Ajor? Though my eyes searched the wide landscape before me, I saw nothing other than the warriors of Du-seen and the beasts of the fields and the forests. Surrounded by forests, I could see wide plains dotting the country as far as the eye could reach; but nowhere was a sign of a small Galu she—the beloved she whom I would have given my right hand to see.

Nobs and I were hungry; we had not eaten since the preceding night, and below us was game-deer, sheep, anything that a hungry hunter might crave; so down the steep trail we made our way, and then upon my belly with Nobs crouching low behind me, I crawled toward a small herd of red deer feeding at the edge of a plain close beside a forest. There was ample cover, what with solitary trees and dotting bushes so that I found no difficulty in stalking up wind to within fifty feet of my quarry—a large, sleek doe unaccompanied by a fawn. Greatly then did I regret my rifle. Never in my life had I shot an arrow, but I knew how it was done, and fitting the shaft to my string, I aimed carefully and let drive. At the same instant I called to Nobs and leaped to me feet.

The arrow caught the doe full in the side, and in the same moment Nobs was after her. She turned to flee with the two of us pursuing her, Nobs with his great fangs bared and I with my short spear poised for a cast. The balance of the herd sprang quickly away; but the hurt doe lagged, and in a moment Nobs was beside her and had leaped at her throat. He had her down when I came up, and I finished her with my spear. It didn't take me long to have a fire going and a steak broiling, and while I was preparing for my own feast, Nobs was filling himself with raw venison. Never have I enjoyed a meal so heartily.

For two days I searched fruitlessly back and forth from the inland sea almost to the barrier cliffs for some trace of Ajor, and always I trended northward; but I saw no sign of any human being, not even the band of Galu warriors under Du-seen; and then I commenced to have misgivings. Had Chalaz spoken the truth to me when he said that Ajor

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

had quit the village of the Kro-lu? Might he not have been acting upon the orders of Al-tan, in whose savage bosom might have lurked some small spark of shame that he had attempted to do to death one who had befriended a Kro-lu warrior—a guest who had brought no harm upon the Kro-lu race—and thus have sent me out upon a fruitless mission in the hope that the wild beasts would do what Al-tan hesitated to do? I did not know; but the more I thought upon it, the more convinced I became that Ajor had not quitted the Kro-lu village; but if not, what had brought Du-seen forth without her? There was a puzzler, and once again I was all at sea.

On the second day of my experience of the Galu country I came upon a bunch of as magnificent horses as it has ever been my lot to see. They were dark bays with blazed faces and perfect surcingles of white about their barrels. Their forelegs were white to the knees. In height they stood almost sixteen hands, the mares being a trifle smaller than the stallions, of which there were three or four in this band of a hundred, which comprised many colts and half-grown horses. Their markings were almost identical, indicating a purity of strain that might have persisted since long ages ago. If I had coveted one of the little ponies of the Kro-lu country, imagine my state of mind when I came upon these magnificent creatures! No sooner had I espied them than I determined to possess one of them; nor did it take me long to select a beautiful young stallion—a four-year-old, I guessed him.

The horses were grazing close to the edge of the forest in which Nobs and I were concealed, while the ground between us and them was dotted with clumps of flowering brush which offered perfect concealment. The stallion of my choice grazed with a filly and two yearlings a little apart from the balance of the herd and nearest to the forest and to me. At my whispered "Charge!" Nobs flattened himself to the ground, and I knew that he would not again move until I called him, unless danger threatened me from the rear. Carefully I crept forward toward my unsuspecting quarry, coming undetected to the concealment of a bush not more than twenty feet from him. Here I quietly arranged my noose, spreading it flat and open upon the ground.

To step to one side of the bush and throw directly from the ground, which is the style I am best in, would take but an instant, and in that instant the stallion would doubtless be under way at top speed in the opposite direction. Then he would have to wheel about when I surprised him, and in doing so, he would most certainly rise slightly upon his hind feet and throw up his head, presenting a perfect target for my noose as he pivoted.

Yes, I had it beautifully worked out, and I waited until he should turn in my direction. At last it became evident that he was doing so, when apparently without cause, the filly raised her head, neighed and started off at a trot in the opposite direction, immediately followed, of course, by the colts and my stallion. It looked for a moment as though my last hope was blasted; but presently their fright, if fright it was, passed, and they resumed grazing again a hundred yards farther on. This time there was no bush within fifty feet of them, and I was at a loss as to how to get within safe roping-distance. Anywhere under forty feet I am an excellent roper, at fifty feet I am fair; but over that I knew it would be a matter of luck if I succeeded in getting my noose about that beautiful arched neck.

As I stood debating the question in my mind, I was almost upon the point of making the attempt at the long throw. I had plenty of rope, this Galu weapon being fully sixty

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

feet long. How I wished for the collies from the ranch! At a word they would have circled this little bunch and driven it straight down to me; and then it flashed into my mind that Nobs had run with those collies all one summer, that he had gone down to the pasture with them after the cows every evening and done his part in driving them back to the milking-barn, and had done it intelligently; but Nobs had never done the thing alone, and it had been a year since he had done it at all. However, the chances were more in favor of my fozzling the long throw than that Nobs would fall down in his part if I gave him the chance.

Having come to a decision, I had to creep back to Nobs and get him, and then with him at my heels return to a large bush near the four horses. Here we could see directly through the bush, and pointing the animals out to Nobs I whispered: "Fetch 'em, boy!"

In an instant he was gone, circling wide toward the rear of the quarry. They caught sight of him almost immediately and broke into a trot away from him; but when they saw that he was apparently giving them a wide berth they stopped again, though they stood watching him, with high-held heads and quivering nostrils. It was a beautiful sight. And then Nobs turned in behind them and trotted slowly back toward me. He did not bark, nor come rushing down upon them, and when he had come closer to them, he proceeded at a walk. The splendid creatures seemed more curious than fearful, making no effort to escape until Nobs was quite close to them; then they trotted slowly away, but at right angles.

And now the fun and trouble commenced. Nobs, of course, attempted to turn them, and he seemed to have selected the stallion to work upon, for he paid no attention to the others, having intelligence enough to know that a lone dog could run his legs off before he could round up four horses that didn't wish to be rounded up. The stallion, however, had notions of his own about being headed, and the result was as pretty a race as one would care to see. Gad, how that horse could run! He seemed to flatten out and shoot through the air with the very minimum of exertion, and at his forefoot ran Nobs, doing his best to turn him. He was barking now, and twice he leaped high against the stallion's flank; but this cost too much effort and always lost him ground, as each time he was hurled heels over head by the impact; yet before they disappeared over a rise in the ground I was sure that Nob's persistence was bearing fruit; it seemed to me that the horse was giving way a trifle to the right. Nobs was between him and the main herd, to which the yearling and filly had already fled.

As I stood waiting for Nobs' return, I could not but speculate upon my chances should I be attacked by some formidable beast. I was some distance from the forest and armed with weapons in the use of which I was quite untrained, though I had practiced some with the spear since leaving the Kro-lu country. I must admit that my thoughts were not pleasant ones, verging almost upon cowardice, until I chanced to think of little Ajor alone in this same land and armed only with a knife! I was immediately filled with shame; but in thinking the matter over since, I have come to the conclusion that my state of mind was influenced largely by my approximate nakedness. If you have never wandered about in broad daylight garbed in a bit of red-deer skin in inadequate length, you can have no conception of the sensation of futility that overwhelms one. Clothes, to a man accustomed to wearing clothes, impart a certain self-confidence; lack of them induces panic.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

But no beast attacked me, though I saw several menacing forms passing through the dark aisles of the forest. At last I commenced to worry over Nobs' protracted absence and to fear that something had befallen him. I was coiling my rope to start out in search of him, when I saw the stallion leap into view at almost the same spot behind which he had disappeared, and at his heels ran Nobs. Neither was running so fast or furiously as when last I had seen them.

The horse, as he approached me, I could see was laboring hard; yet he kept gamely to his task, and Nobs, too. The splendid fellow was driving the quarry straight toward me. I crouched behind my bush and laid my noose in readiness to throw. As the two approached my hiding-place, Nobs reduced his speed, and the stallion, evidently only too glad of the respite, dropped into a trot. It was at this gait that he passed me; my rope-hand flew forward; the honda, well down, held the noose open, and the beautiful bay fairly ran his head into it.

Instantly he wheeled to dash off at right angles. I braced myself with the rope around my hip and brought him to a sudden stand. Rearing and struggling, he fought for his liberty while Nobs, panting and with lolling tongue, came and threw himself down near me. He seemed to know that his work was done and that he had earned his rest. The stallion was pretty well spent, and after a few minutes of struggling he stood with feet far spread, nostrils dilated and eyes wide, watching me as I edged toward him, taking in the slack of the rope as I advanced. A dozen times he reared and tried to break away; but always I spoke soothingly to him and after an hour of effort I succeeded in reaching his head and stroking his muzzle. Then I gathered a handful of grass and offered it to him, and always I talked to him in a quiet and reassuring voice.

I had expected a battle royal; but on the contrary I found his taming a matter of comparative ease.

Though wild, he was gentle to a degree, and of such remarkable intelligence that he soon discovered that I had no intention of harming him. After that, all was easy. Before that day was done, I had taught him to lead and to stand while I stroked his head and flanks, and to eat from my hand, and had the satisfaction of seeing the light of fear die in his large, intelligent eyes.

The following day I fashioned a hackamore from a piece which I cut from the end of my long Galu rope, and then I mounted him fully prepared for a struggle of titanic proportions in which I was none too sure that he would not come off victor; but he never made the slightest effort to unseat me, and from then on his education was rapid. No horse ever learned more quickly the meaning of the rein and the pressure of the knees. I think he soon learned to love me, and I know that I loved him; while he and Nobs were the best of pals. I called him Ace. I had a friend who was once in the French flying-corps, and when Ace let himself out, he certainly flew.

I cannot explain to you, nor can you understand, unless you too are a horseman, the exhilarating feeling of well-being which pervaded me from the moment that I commenced riding Ace. I was a new man, imbued with a sense of superiority that led me to feel that I could go forth and conquer all Caspak single-handed. Now, when I needed meat, I ran it down on Ace and roped it, and when some great beast with which we could not cope threatened us, we galloped away to safety; but for the most part the creatures we met

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

looked upon us in terror, for Ace and I in combination presented a new and unusual beast beyond their experience and ken.

For five days I rode back and forth across the southern end of the Galu country without seeing a human being; yet all the time I was working slowly toward the north, for I had determined to comb the territory thoroughly in search of Ajor; but on the fifth day as I emerged from a forest, I saw some distance ahead of me a single small figure pursued by many others. Instantly I recognized the quarry as Ajor. The entire party was fully a mile away from me, and they were crossing my path at right angles. Ajor a few hundred yards in advance of those who followed her. One of her pursuers was far in advance of the others, and was gaining upon her rapidly. With a word and a pressure of the knees I sent Ace leaping out into the open, and with Nobs running close alongside, we raced toward her.

At first none of them saw us; but as we neared Ajor, the pack behind the foremost pursuer discovered us and set up such a howl as I never before have heard. They were all Galus, and I soon recognized the foremost as Du-seen. He was almost upon Ajor now, and with a sense of terror such as I had never before experienced, I saw that he ran with his knife in his hand, and that his intention was to slay rather than capture. I could not understand it, but I could only urge Ace to greater speed, and most nobly did the wondrous creature respond to my demands. If ever a four-footed creature approximated flying, it was Ace that day.

Du-seen, intent upon his brutal design, had as yet not noticed us. He was within a pace of Ajor when Ace and I dashed between them, and I, leaning down to the left, swept my little barbarian into the hollow of an arm and up on the withers of my glorious Ace. We had snatched her from the very clutches of Du-seen, who halted, mystified and raging. Ajor, too, was mystified, as we had come up from diagonally behind her so that she had no idea that we were near until she was swung to Ace's back. The little savage turned with drawn knife to stab me, thinking that I was some new enemy, when her eyes found my face and she recognized me. With a little sob she threw her arms about my neck, gasping: "My Tom! My Tom!"

And then Ace sank suddenly into thick mud to his belly, and Ajor and I were thrown far over his head. He had run into one of those numerous springs which cover Caspak. Sometimes they are little lakes, again but tiny pools, and often mere quagmires of mud, as was this one overgrown with lush grasses which effectually hid its treacherous identity. It is a wonder that Ace did not break a leg, so fast he was going when he fell; but he didn't, though with four good legs he was unable to wallow from the mire. Ajor and I had sprawled face down in the covering grasses and so had not sunk deeply; but when we tried to rise, we found that there was not footing, and presently we saw that Du-seen and his followers were coming down upon us. There was no escape. It was evident that we were doomed.

"Slay me!" begged Ajor. "Let me die at thy loved hands rather than beneath the knife of this hateful thing, for he will kill me. He has sworn to kill me. Last night he captured me, and when later he would have his way with me, I struck him with my fists and with my knife I stabbed him, and then I escaped, leaving him raging in pain and thwarted desire. Today they searched for me and found me; and as I fled, Du-seen ran after me

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

crying that he would slay me. Kill me, my Tom, and then fall upon thine own spear, for they will kill you horribly if they take you alive.”

I couldn't kill her—not at least until the last moment; and I told her so, and that I loved her, and that until death came, I would live and fight for her.

Nobs had followed us into the bog and had done fairly well at first, but when he neared us he too sank to his belly and could only flounder about. We were in this predicament when Du-seen and his followers approached the edge of the horrible swamp. I saw that Al-tan was with him and many other Kro-lu warriors. The alliance against Jor the chief had, therefore, been consummated, and this horde was already marching upon the Galu city. I sighed as I thought how close I had been to saving not only Ajor but her father and his people from defeat and death.

Beyond the swamp was a dense wood. Could we have reached this, we would have been safe; but it might as well have been a hundred miles away as a hundred yards across that hidden lake of sticky mud. Upon the edge of the swamp Du-seen and his horde halted to revile us. They could not reach us with their hands; but at a command from Du-seen they fitted arrows to their bows, and I saw that the end had come. Ajor huddled close to me, and I took her in my arms. “I love you, Tom,” she said, “only you.” Tears came to my eyes then, not tears of self-pity for my predicament, but tears from a heart filled with a great love—a heart that sees the sun of its life and its love setting even as it rises.

The renegade Galus and their Kro-lu allies stood waiting for the word from Du-seen that would launch that barbed avalanche of death upon us, when there broke from the wood beyond the swamp the sweetest music that ever fell upon the ears of man—the sharp staccato of at least two score rifles fired rapidly at will. Down went the Galu and Kro-lu warriors like tenpins before that deadly fusillade.

What could it mean? To me it meant but one thing, and that was that Hollis and Short and the others had scaled the cliffs and made their way north to the Galu country upon the opposite side of the island in time to save Ajor and me from almost certain death. I didn't have to have an introduction to them to know that the men who held those rifles were the men of my own party; and when, a few minutes later, they came forth from their concealment, my eyes verified my hopes. There they were, every man-jack of them; and with them were a thousand straight, sleek warriors of the Galu race; and ahead of the others came two men in the garb of Galus. Each was tall and straight and wonderfully muscled; yet they differed as Ace might differ from a perfect specimen of another species. As they approached the mire, Ajor held forth her arms and cried, “Jor, my chief! My father!” and the elder of the two rushed in knee-deep to rescue her, and then the other came close and looked into my face, and his eyes went wide, and mine too, and I cried: “Bowen! For heaven's sake, Bowen Tyler!”

It was he. My search was ended. Around me were all my company and the man we had searched a new world to find. They cut saplings from the forest and laid a road into the swamp before they could get us all out, and then we marched back to the city of Jor the Galu chief, and there was great rejoicing when Ajor came home again mounted upon the glossy back of the stallion Ace.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Tyler and Hollis and Short and all the rest of us Americans nearly worked our jaws loose on the march back to the village, and for days afterward we kept it up. They told me how they had crossed the barrier cliffs in five days, working twenty-four hours a day in three eight-hour shifts with two reliefs to each shift alternating half-hourly. Two men with electric drills driven from the dynamos aboard the Toreador drilled two holes four feet apart in the face of the cliff and in the same horizontal planes. The holes slanted slightly downward. Into these holes the iron rods brought as a part of our equipment and for just this purpose were inserted, extending about a foot beyond the face of the rock, across these two rods a plank was laid, and then the next shift, mounting to the new level, bored two more holes five feet above the new platform, and so on.

During the nights the searchlights from the Toreador were kept playing upon the cliff at the point where the drills were working, and at the rate of ten feet an hour the summit was reached upon the fifth day. Ropes were lowered, blocks lashed to trees at the top, and crude elevators rigged, so that by the night of the fifth day the entire party, with the exception of the few men needed to man the Toreador, were within Caspak with an abundance of arms, ammunition and equipment.

From then on, they fought their way north in search of me, after a vain and perilous effort to enter the hideous reptile-infested country to the south. Owing to the number of guns among them, they had not lost a man; but their path was strewn with the dead creatures they had been forced to slay to win their way to the north end of the island, where they had found Bowen and his bride among the Galus of Jor.

The reunion between Bowen and Nobs was marked by a frantic display upon Nobs' part, which almost stripped Bowen of the scanty attire that the Galu custom had vouchsafed him. When we arrived at the Galu city, Lys La Rue was waiting to welcome us. She was Mrs. Tyler now, as the master of the Toreador had married them the very day that the search-party had found them, though neither Lys nor Bowen would admit that any civil or religious ceremony could have rendered more sacred the bonds with which God had united them.

Neither Bowen nor the party from the Toreador had seen any sign of Bradley and his party. They had been so long lost now that any hopes for them must be definitely abandoned. The Galus had heard rumors of them, as had the Western Kro-lu and Band-lu; but none had seen aught of them since they had left Fort Dinosaur months since.

We rested in Jor's village for a fortnight while we prepared for the southward journey to the point where the Toreador was to lie off shore in wait for us. During these two weeks Chal-az came up from the Kro-lu country, now a full-fledged Galu. He told us that the remnants of Al-tan's party had been slain when they attempted to re-enter Kro-lu. Chal-az had been made chief, and when he rose, had left the tribe under a new leader whom all respected.

Nobs stuck close to Bowen; but Ace and Ajor and I went out upon many long rides through the beautiful north Galu country. Chal-az had brought my arms and ammunition up from Kro-lu with him; but my clothes were gone; nor did I miss them once I became accustomed to the free attire of the Galu.

At last came the time for our departure; upon the following morning we were to set

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

out toward the south and the Toreador and dear old California. I had asked Ajor to go with us; but Jor her father had refused to listen to the suggestion. No pleas could swerve him from his decision: Ajor, the cos-ata-lo, from whom might spring a new and greater Caspakian race, could not be spared. I might have any other she among the Galus; but Ajor—no!

The poor child was heartbroken; and as for me, I was slowly realizing the hold that Ajor had upon my heart and wondered how I should get along without her. As I held her in my arms that last night, I tried to imagine what life would be like without her, for at last there had come to me the realization that I loved her—loved my little barbarian; and as I finally tore myself away and went to my own hut to snatch a few hours' sleep before we set off upon our long journey on the morrow, I consoled myself with the thought that time would heal the wound and that back in my native land I should find a mate who would be all and more to me than little Ajor could ever be—a woman of my own race and my own culture.

Morning came more quickly than I could have wished. I rose and breakfasted, but saw nothing of Ajor. It was best, I thought, that I go thus without the harrowing pangs of a last farewell. The party formed for the march, an escort of Galu warriors ready to accompany us. I could not even bear to go to Ace's corral and bid him farewell. The night before, I had given him to Ajor, and now in my mind the two seemed inseparable.

And so we marched away, down the street flanked with its stone houses and out through the wide gateway in the stone wall which surrounds the city and on across the clearing toward the forest through which we must pass to reach the northern boundary of Galu, beyond which we would turn south. At the edge of the forest I cast a backward glance at the city which held my heart, and beside the massive gateway I saw that which brought me to a sudden halt. It was a little figure leaning against one of the great upright posts upon which the gates swing—a crumpled little figure; and even at this distance I could see its shoulders heave to the sobs that racked it. It was the last straw.

Bowen was near me. "Good-bye old man," I said. "I'm going back."

He looked at me in surprise. "Good-bye, old man," he said, and grasped my hand. "I thought you'd do it in the end."

And then I went back and took Ajor in my arms and kissed the tears from her eyes and a smile to her lips while together we watched the last of the Americans disappear into the forest.

DAVE INNES came back to Sari. He may have been gone a week, or he may have been gone for years. It was still noon. But Perry had completed his aeroplane. He was very proud of it. He could scarcely wait to show it to Dave Innes.

"Does it fly?" asked Innes.

"Of course it flies," snapped Perry. "What good would an aeroplane be which did not fly."

"None," replied Innes. "Have you flown it yet?"

"No, of course not. The day of the first flight is going to be epochal in the annals of Pellucidar. Do you think I'd fly it without you being here to see?"

"That's mighty nice of you, Abner; and I appreciate it. When are you going to fly it?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Right now, right now. Come and see it,"

"Just what do you propose using an aeroplane for?" asked Innes.

"To drop bombs, of course, just think of the havoc it will raise! Think of these poor people who have never seen an aeroplane before running out from their caves as it circles overhead. Think of the vast stride it will be in civilizing these people! Why, we should be able to wipe out a village with a few bombs."

"When I went back to the outer crust after the Great War that ended in 1918," said Innes, "I heard a lot about the use of aeroplanes in war; but I also heard about a weapon which causes far more suffering and death than bombs."

"What was that?" demanded Perry, eagerly.

"Poison gas," said Innes.

"Ah, well," said Perry, "perhaps I shall put my mind to that later."

Dave Innes grinned. He knew that there was not a kinder hearted person living than Abner Perry. He knew that Perry's plans for slaughter were purely academic. Perry was a theoretician, pure and simple. "All right," he said, "let's have a look at your plane."

Perry led him to a small hangar—a strange anachronism in stone-age Pellucidar. "There!" he said, with pride. "There she is; the first aeroplane to fly the skies of Pellucidar."

"Is that an aeroplane?" demanded Innes. "It certainly doesn't look like one."

"That is because it utilizes some entirely new principles," explained Perry.

"It looks more like a parachute with a motor and a cockpit on top of it."

"Exactly!" said Perry. "You grasped the idea instantly yet there is more to it than the eye perceives. You see one of the dangers of flying is, naturally, that of falling; now, by designing a plane on the principles of a parachute, I have greatly minimized that danger."

"But what keeps it in the air at all? What gets it up?"

"Beneath the plane is a blower, operated by the engine. This blows a strong current of air constantly straight up from beneath the wing; and, of course, the air flow, while the ship is in motion supports it as is true in other, less advanced, designs; while the blower assists it in quickly attaining altitude."

"Are you going to try to go up in that thing?" demanded Innes.

"Why, no; I have been saving that honor for you. Think of it! The first man to have flown in the heavens of Pellucidar. You should be grateful to me, David."

Dave Innes had to smile; Perry was so naive about the whole thing. "Well," he said, "I don't want to disappoint you, Abner; and so I'll give the thing a trial—just to prove to you that it won't fly."

"You'll be surprised," said Perry. "It will soar aloft like a lark on the wing."

A considerable number of Sarians had gathered to inspect the plane and witness the flight. They were all skeptical, but not for the same reasons that David Innes was skeptical. They knew nothing about aeronautics, but they knew that man could not fly. Dian the Beautiful was among them. She is Dave Innes's mate.

"Do you think it will fly?" she asked Innes.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"No."

"Then why risk your life?"

"If it doesn't fly, there will be no risk; and it will please Abner if I try," he replied.

"There will be no honor," she said, "for it will not be the first aeroplane to fly over Pellucidar. The great ship that you called a dirigible brought a plane. Was it not Jason Gridley who flew it until it was brought down by a thipdar?"

They were walking around the plane examining it carefully. The frame of the single parachute-like wing was of bamboo: the "fabric" was fabricated of the peritoneum of a large dinosaur. It was a thin, transparent membrane well suited to the purpose. The cockpit was set down into the top of the wing; the motor stuck out in front like a sore thumb; and behind a long tail seemed to have been designed to counter-balance the weight of the engine. It carried the stabilizers, fin, rudder, and elevators.

The engine, the first gas engine built in Pellucidar, was, an achievement of the first magnitude. It had been built practically by hand by men of the stone age, under the direction of Perry, and without precision instruments.

"Will it run?" asked Innes.

"Of course it will run," replied Perry. "It is, I will concede, a trifle noisy; and is susceptible to some refinements, but a sweet thing nevertheless."

"I hope so," said Innes.

"Are you ready, David?" asked the inventor.

"Quite," replied Innes.

"Then climb into the cockpit and I'll explain the controls to you. You will find everything very simple."

Ten minutes later Innes said he knew all about flying the ship that he would ever know, and Perry climbed down to the ground.

"Everybody get out of the way!" he shouted. "You are about to witness the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Pellucidar."

A mechanic took his place at the propeller. It was so far off the ground that he had to stand on a specially constructed ladder. A man on either side stood ready to pull the blocks from beneath the wheels.

"Contact!" shouted Perry.

"Contact!" replied Innes.

The man at the propeller gave it a turn. The engine spluttered and died. "By golly!" exclaimed Innes! "It really fired. Try it again."

"Give her more throttle," said Perry.

The mechanic spun her again, and this time the engine took hold. The mechanic leaped from the ladder and dragged it away. David opened the throttle a little wider, and the engine almost leaped from its seat. It sounded as though a hundred men were building a hundred boilers simultaneously.

David shouted to the two men to pull the blocks, but no one could hear him above the din of the motor. He waved and pointed and signalled, and finally Perry grasped what he wanted, and had the blocks withdrawn. Everyone stood in wide-eyed silence as

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

David opened the throttle wider. The engine raced. The plane moved! But it moved backward! It swung around and nearly crashed into the crowd of Sarians before Innes could cut the motor.

Perry approached, scratching his head. "What in the world did you do, David," he asked, "to make an aeroplane back up?"

Dave Innes laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Perry. "Don't you realize that we may have stumbled upon something sensational in aerodynamics? Just think of a fighter plane that could go either forward or backward! just think of how it could dodge enemy planes! Think of its maneuverability! What did you do, David?"

"The honor is wholly yours, Abner," replied Innes.

"You did it."

"But how did I do it?"

"You've reversed the pitch of your propeller blades. The plane cannot go in any other direction than backward."

"Oh," said Perry, weakly.

"But it does move," said Innes, encouragingly, "and the fault is easily remedied."

There being no such thing as time in Pellucidar, no, one cared how long it took to effect a change in the propeller. Everyone except Perry and a couple of his mechanics lay down in the shade, under trees or under the plane until Perry announced that the propeller had been reversed.

Innes took his place in the cockpit, a mechanic spun the prop, the engine started, the blocks were yanked away. The engine roared and pounded and leaped. The Plane almost jumped from the ground in harmony with the vibration. Innes was thrown about so violently in the cockpit that he could scarcely find the controls or keep his hands and feet on them.

Suddenly the plane started forward. It gained momentum. It rushed down the long, level stretch that Perry had selected on which to build his hangar. Innes struggled with the controls, but the thing wouldn't rise. It bounced about like a ship in a heavy sea until Innes was dizzy; and then, suddenly the fabric burst into flame.

Dave Innes discovered the flames as he was nearing the end of the runway. He shut off the motor, applied the brakes, and jumped. A moment later the gas tank burst, and Abner Perry's latest invention went up in smoke.

EVEN THOUGH Abner Perry's first gun powder would not burn, his aeroplane would not leave the ground, and his first ship turned bottomside up when it was launched, nevertheless he had achieved a great deal since Fate and the Iron Mole had deposited him at the center of the Earth.

He had discovered ores and smelted them; he had manufactured steel; he had made cement and produced a very good grade of concrete. He had discovered oil in Sari and refined it to produce gasoline; he had manufactured small arms and cannon. He had found and mined gold, silver, platinum, lead, and other metals. He was probably the busiest man in a whole world and the most useful. The great trouble was that the men of

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the stone age, or at least most of them, were not far enough advanced to appreciate what Perry had done and could do for them.

Often warriors armed with his rifles would throw them away in battle and go after the enemy with stone hatchets, or they would seize them by the muzzles and use them as clubs. He built a pumping plant near the village of Sari and pumped water through concrete pipes right into the villa yet many of the women still insisted upon walking half a mile to the spring and carrying water back in gourds balanced on the tops of their heads. Time meant nothing to them and carrying water on their heads gave them a fine carriage.

But Perry kept on just the same. He was never discouraged. He was almost perpetually good natured; and when he wasn't praying, he was swearing like a trooper.

Dave Innes loved him, and so did Dian the Beautiful One and Ghak the Hairy One, who was King of Sari. In fact everyone who knew Abner Perry loved him. The young Sarians who worked for him looked up to him and worshipped him as though he were a god. And Abner Perry was very happy.

After the aeroplane failed, he started in on another invention that he had had in mind for some time. If he had known what was to come of it, he would probably have thrown away all his plans; but of course he could not know.

Dave Innes took a company of warriors and went on a tour of inspection of some of the other kingdoms of the loose confederation which constitutes the Empire of Pellucidar, of which he had been elected Emperor, following the incident of the aeroplane. He went first to Amoz, which is two hundred miles northeast of Sari on the Lural Az, a great uncharted, unexplored ocean. Six hundred miles northeast of Amoz lies Kali. Kali is the last of the kingdoms in this direction which still gives allegiance to the Empire. Suvi, four hundred miles westerly from Kali, dropped out of the confederation and made war upon Kali. The king of Suvi, whose name is Fash, had once held Dian the Beautiful prisoner; and that act had never been avenged.

Dave Innes had this in mind when he went North. It would be well to teach Fash a lesson and, perhaps, place on the throne of Suvi a man loyal to the Empire.

Sari is not on the sea coast; so the party marched to Greenwich, a hundred and fifty miles, and there took one of the ships of the Navy, which had been built under Perry's direction. Greenwich was established and named by Dave Innes and Abner Perry. Through it passes the prime meridian of Pellucidar, also an invention of Innes and Perry.

From Greenwich, they sailed to Amoz in the EPS Sari. The EPS is a conceit of Perry's. It means Empire of Pellucidar ship, like USS California. The Sari, like most of the ships of Pellucidar, was manned by red skinned Mezops from the Island of Anoroc, a seafaring race of fighting men. They had known only canoes until Perry and Innes introduced them to sails, but they soon mastered the new ships and learned what little of navigation Dave Innes could teach them—all dead reckoning, with only crude compasses to aid them.

Beneath a stationary sun, without the aid of stars or moon, there can be few navigational aids. The Mezops knew all there was to know about tides and currents in the coastal waters near their island. Innes and Perry gave them the compass, the log, and a chronometer which was never accurate and which could never be corrected; so it was sel-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

dom used. Their navigation was mostly by guess and by God, but they got places. They could always sail the most direct course toward home because of the marvellous homing sense which is common to all Pellucidarians, a Providential compensation for their lack of guiding celestial bodies.

Kander is King of Amoz. The title, like that of Emperor, was Perry's idea. Kander, like the other kings of the confederation, is chief of a tribe of cave men. He is about as far advanced in the scale of evolution and civilization as the Cro-Magnons of the outer crust were in their time; but like the Cro-Magnons, he is intelligent.

From him Innes learned that Fash was warring with Kali again and had boasted that he would move on down south and conquer Amoz and Sari, making himself Emperor of Pellucidar. Now Innes had brought but fifty warriors with him, but he decided to go on to Kali and learn first hand what was happening there. First he sent a runner back to Sari with a verbal message instructing Ghak to gather the fleet at Amoz and proceed to Kali with as many warriors as the ships would accommodate; then he got a detail of fifty warriors from Kander and sailed north for Kali, the hundred warriors straining the capacity of the EPS Sari.

Six hundred miles by water brought the Sari opposite Kali, which lies some forty miles inland; and from here he dispatched a runner to Oose, King of Kali. The runner was Hodon the Fleet One, a Sarian warrior of proven courage and loyalty; and it requires courage to carry a message across savage Pellucidar. Fierce beasts and fiercer reptiles are a constant menace, and hostile tribes may be in ambush along the way.

All the forty miles to Kali, Hodon had good fortune with him. Once he met a tarag, the giant sabertooth tiger; and the beast charged him, but an experienced runner knows how best to safeguard himself. He does not run in a straight line across open plains, but from tree to tree, much, after the manner of a merchant ship zigzagging to elude a submarine.

The sabertooth, which is a confirmed man-eater, may be aware of this strategy from hunting of men; but, be that as it may, this particular beast timed its charge to a nicety and launched it at the moment that Hodon was farthest from any tree.

It was a thrilling race-for Hodon a race with Death; for few men have met and killed a tarag singlehanded. An occasional super-warrior may boast that he has done so with the long, stout spear which they usually carry; but Hodon, running light, carried no spear. He had only his speed upon which he might depend for his life, his speed and a stone knife.

The tarag covered the ground in great, bounding leaps which would quickly have overhauled an ordinary man; but Hodon is no ordinary man. He has not won the distinction of having Fleet One added to his name for nothing. And now he really ran.

The great beast was but a few yards behind him when Hodon sprang into the tree that was his goal and scrambled out of harm's way; then he sat upon a branch and spit down into the face of the tarag and called him all the vile names to which a Pellucidarian can lay his tongue, and they are many.

The tarag wasted no time waiting for Hodon to come down, as experience may have taught him that he would starve to death before any man-thing would come down to be

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eaten; so he made off in search of other prey.

A little farther on another tree saved Hodon from the talons of a thipdar, a huge pterodactyl such as winged the steaming skies of the Mesozoic. This mighty pteranodon, with a wing spread of twenty feet, hunted high in the air—a preposterous eagle or hawk, ready to swoop down upon any living thing. The only defense against it is the shelter of a tree, and once again Hodon reached this sanctuary just in time.

Hissing with rage, the reptile soared away; and when it was out of sight Hodon continued on to Kali, which he reached without further adventure.

The village of Kali consists mostly of eaves in a lime stone cliff, with a few rude, thatched shelters at its base, which are used for cooking, eating, and communal gatherings.

As Hodon approached the village he was met by a score of warriors, which was what he might have expected on approaching any well guarded village. They demanded his business there; and when he told them that he bore a message from the Emperor of Pellucidar to Oose, the King of Kali, they looked at one another; and some of them grinned behind his back.

“I will take word to the king,” said one. “Wait here.”

Presently the man returned and instructed Hodon to follow him, and all the warriors who had come to meet him accompanied them. It might have been a guard of honor, but Hodon had a feeling that it more nearly resembled the guard of a prisoner.

He was conducted to one of the thatched shelters, where a man sat upon a stool, surrounded by other warriors.

“What message do you bring to Oose, King of Kali, from the Emperor of Pellucidar?” demanded the man.

Now, Hodon had never before been to Kali, nor had he ever seen Oose; but it was evident to him that this man was the king. He thought that he was an ill-favored fellow, and he took an instinctive dislike to him.

“You are the king?” he asked, wishing to make sure before he delivered the message. “You are the king of Kali?”

“Yes,” replied the man. “I am the king of Kali. What message do you bring?”

“The Emperor wishes you to know that his ship is anchored off the coast of Kali with a hundred warriors. He has heard that you are having trouble with Fash, the king of Suvi; and he wishes to talk the matter over with you, that an expedition may be sent against Fash to punish him for his treason to the Empire. I am to take word back to him as to whether you will come to the coast to talk with him, or if you would prefer that he came here; for he knows that it is not always easy for a village to feed a hundred extra men.”

“I will send a runner to the Emperor,” said the king of Kali. “You will remain here and rest.”

“My orders are to bring the message to the Emperor myself,” replied Hodon.

“I give orders here,” said the king; and then he spoke to the leader of the warriors who surrounded Hodon. “Take this man to a high cave and place a guard over him. See that he does not escape.”

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Hodon. "I am a Sarian and one of the Emperor's men. What you are doing is treason."

"Take him away," said the king.

Up rickety wooden ladders Hodon's guard forced him to climb to the highest level. Here a narrow ledge ran in front of several cave mouths. A guard of two warriors already squatted on the ledge near the top of the ladder; two others sat before the mouth of one of the eaves. Into this cave Hodon was ordered, and at the same time the king of Kali dispatched a runner to the coast with a message for David Innes.

When Hodon's eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the interior of the cave, he saw that he was not alone. The cave was a large one, and fully fifty men squatted or lay upon the floor.

"Who are you?" demanded one of these, as Hodon groped his way in search of a place to sit down.

"I seem to be a prisoner," replied Hodon.

"We are all prisoners," said the man. "I did not recognize you as you came in. Are you a Kalian?"

"Are you?" asked Hodon.

"We are all Kilians."

"Then why are you prisoners in Kali?"

demanded Hodon.

"Because the warriors of Suvi attacked and overcame the village while most of the men were on the hunt and as we returned they fell upon us from ambush, killing many and capturing the rest."

"Then the man sitting in the shelter at the foot of the cliff is not king of Kali?" asked Hodon.

"He calls himself King of Kali, because he has captured the village," replied the man; "but I am king of Kali."

"You are Oose?" demanded Hodon.

"I am Oose, and the man who calls himself King of Kali is Fash, the king of Suvi."

"Then I have given the Emperor's message to the Emperor's enemy," said Hodon, "but how was I to know."

"The message was for me?" asked Oose.

"For you," said Hodon, and then he repeated the message to Oose.

"It is bad," said Oose, "for now Fash is warned."

"How many warriors has he?" asked Hodon.

"I can count only to ten times the number of my fingers," said Oose. "We men of Kali are not wise like the men of Sari who had been taught many things by Innes and Perry, but if I counted all of my fingers ten times; then I should say that Fash has five times that many warriors."

Hodon shook his head. "I must escape," he said; "for when I do not return after a couple of sleeps, the Emperor will come after me; and he will be outnumbered five to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

one.”

“You cannot escape,” said Oose. “Four warriors squat upon the ledge, and many warriors are at the foot of the Cliff.”

“Are we allowed on the ledge?” asked Hodon.

“If you have a good reason you will be allowed to go to the little cave at the far end of the ledge.”

“I have a good reason,” said Hodon, and he went to the mouth of the cave and spoke to one of the warriors on guard there.

The fellow grunted surly permission, and Hodon came out upon the ledge and moved slowly toward the little cave at the far end. He did not look down; but always up, scanning the face of the cliff to its summit, which was only a few feet above his head.

A WARRIOR CAME to the shore of the Lural Az. He saw a ship anchored in a little cove a short distance off shore, and he shouted until he had attracted attention of those on board. A small boat floated beside the ship, and presently a number of copper colored warriors dove from the deck of the ship and clambered into the small boat, which they paddled toward the shore. When they had come close, they shouted to the warrior and asked him who he was and what he wanted.

“I bring a message from the king of Kali to the Emperor of Pellucidar,” the man replied; then the boat was brought to the shore, and the messenger taken aboard. A few moments later he was hauled to the deck of the Sari and brought before David Innes.

“You bring a message from the king of Kali?” asked Innes. “Why did my own warrior not return with it as I ordered?”

“Hodon was ill; and he was very, very tired,” replied the messenger. “That there might be no delay, the King sent me.”

“What is the message?”

“The King asks that you come to Kali. He cannot leave Kali now because of the danger of attack.”

“I understand,” said Innes. “I shall come at once.”

“I will go ahead and tell the King. He will be very pleased. Will you come alone?”

“I will bring a hundred warriors with me,” replied Innes.

So David Innes started for Kali, and the messenger of Fash went ahead to carry the word to his king.

HODON WALKED SLOWLY along the ledge, examining every inch of the cliff face above him until he came to the little cave at the far end. Here the cliff dipped downward, and its summit was scarcely four feet above Hodon's head. He turned and looked back along the ledge. One of the guards was watching him; so Hodon stooped and entered the little cave. He turned around immediately, waited a moment, and then looked out. The guard was still looking at him. Hodon retreated into the cave, remained there a short time, and then came boldly out. His heart sank—two members of the guard had their eyes on him. He knew that he must have just a moment while no one was looking in order to put his plan into successful operation. Now there was nothing to do but return to the prison cave.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Here he tried to think of some plan that would help him to carry out that which he had in mind, and finally he hit upon one. He moved over beside Oose, and sat down close to him; then he explained his plan in low whispers.

"We will do it," said Oose; "but do not forget what I told you-you cannot escape."

"I can try," said Hodon.

After a while-whether an hour, a day, or a week of outer Earthly time, who may know?-the guard upon the ledge was changed; then Hodon went immediately to the mouth of the cave and asked permission to go to the small cave at the end of the ledge. Again he was granted permission.

He walked along the ledge slowly. This time he looked down. At the bottom of the cliff he saw women and children, but only a few warriors-perhaps just enough to guard the village. Where were the others? Hodon thought that he knew, and he chafed to make good his escape. If he did, would he be in time?

Just as he reached the little cave he heard shouts and yells behind him. They were muffled, as though they came from the interior of a cave. He glanced back, and saw the four guards running toward the prison cave. Hodon smiled.

AFTER DAVID INNES left for Kali, Abner Perry busied himself upon a new project. He was determined to have something worth while to show Innes when he returned, for he was still a little depressed over the signal failure of his aeroplane.

He sent hunters out to slay dinosaurs-the largest they could find-with orders to bring back only the peritonea of those they killed; and while they were gone he succeeded in capping a gas well which had been blowing millions of cubic feet of natural gas into the air of Pellucidar for-well, who knows for how long?

He had many women braiding rope, and others weaving a large basket-a basket four feet in diameter and three feet high. It was the largest basket the Sarians had ever seen.

While this work was going on, the messenger arrived from Innes instructing Ghak to set forth with many warriors. When they had departed there were few warriors left, and they had to remain in the village as a guard, except for a couple of hunters sent out daily for fresh meat. The village was full of women; but that did not interfere with Perry's plans, as the warriors had returned with more than enough peritonea.

The peritonea was stretched and dried and rubbed until they were thoroughly cured; then Perry cut them into strange shapes according to a pattern he had fashioned, and the women sewed them together with very fine stitches and sealed the seams with a cement that Perry thought would not be attacked by the constituents of natural gas.

When this work was complete, Perry attached the great bag to the basket with the ropes the women had braided; and to the bottom of the basket he attached a heavier rope that was five or six hundred feet long. No one in Sari had ever seen a rope like that, but they had long since ceased to marvel much at anything that Perry did.

With little ropes, many little ropes, Perry fastened the basket to the ground by means of pegs driven into the earth all around it; then he ran a clay pipe from the gas well into the opening at the small end of the bag. Perry had given birth to balloon! To him it was the forerunner of a fleet of mighty dirigibles which could carry tons of high-explosive

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

bombs, and bring civilization to countless underprivileged cliff dwellers.

Hodon smiled, just a fleeting little smile that vanished almost as it was born; then he stooped before the little cave at the far end of the ledge and leaped upward. Hodon was proud of his legs; so was all Sari. They were the best legs in the Empire of Pellucidar, so far as anyone knew to the contrary; and they were just as marvelous at jumping as they were at running. They easily carried Hodon upward until his fingers could seize the top of the cliff. It was solid limestone.

Hodon had determined that when he first examined the cliff. Had there been top soil right up to the edge of the cliff, the thing would not have been so easy-it might, in fact, have been impossible of accomplishment; but there was no top soil, and the hard stone did not crumble. It held magnificently, doing its part to thwart the evil machinations of the wicked Fash.

Sometimes we are annoyed by the studied perversities of inanimate objects, like collar buttons and quail on toast; but we must remember that, after all, some of them are the best friends of man. Take the dollar bill, for instance-but why go on? You can think of as many as I can.

So Hodon the Fleet One clambered over the summit of the cliff of Kali, and no man saw him go. When he had come he had carried a stone knife, but they had taken that from him. Now he must go absolutely unarmed across perhaps forty miles of danger ridden terrain, but he was not afraid. Sometimes I think that the men of the old stone age must have been very brave. They must have had to be very brave, as otherwise they could not have survived. The coward might have survived for a while-just long enough for him to starve to death-but it took a brave man to go out and brave the terrific creatures he must have had to face to find food for himself and his family.

Hodon's only thought now was to reach David Innes before he ran into the ambush that he was sure Fash had laid for him. He moved swiftly, but he moved silently. Always every sense was alert for danger. His keen eyes ranged far ahead; his sensitive nostrils picked up every scent borne to them by each vagrant breeze. He was glad that he was running up wind, for now he could be warned of almost any danger that lay ahead.

Suddenly he caught a scent which brought a frown of puzzlement to his brow. It told him that there was a woman ahead of him-a lone woman-where there should not have been a woman. His judgment told him that there must be at least one man where there was a woman so far from a village, but his nostrils told him that there was no man.

He kept on in the direction of the woman, for that was the direction in which he was going. Now he went even more warily, if that were possible; and at last he saw her. Her back was toward him. She was moving slowly, looking in all directions. He guessed that she was afraid. She did not know that she was not alone until a hand fell upon her shoulder. She wheeled, a dagger in her hand-a slim dagger laboriously chipped from basalt-and as she wheeled, she struck a vicious blow at Hodon's breast.

Being a Pellucidarian, he had expected something like this; for one does not accost a strange lady with impunity in the stone age. So he was ready. He seized her wrist, and held it. Then she tried to bite him.

Hodon smiled down into her flashing eyes, for she was young and beautiful. "Who

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing out here so far from your village alone?"

"That is my business," she said. "Let me go! You cannot keep me, for if you do I'll surely kill you."

"I can't waste time on you," said Hodon, "but you are too young and good looking to be left for the first stray tarag to make a meal of. You may come along with me, if you wish. We have only your dagger, but I'll use it for you."

"Tell me who you are," she said, a trifle more amicably.

"I am Hodon of Sari," he said.

"A Sarian! They are the friends of my father's people.

"You are a Sarian, you will not harm me."

"Who said I would. I am a Sarian. Now who are you?"

"I am O-aa, the daughter of Oose, King of Kali."

"And you are running away because Fash has conquered your people. Am I right?" He released his hold upon her wrist, and she returned her dagger to its sheath.

"Yes, you are right," she replied. "After Fash had conquered Kali, he took me for himself; but I escaped. It was well for Fash that I did, because I should have killed him. You see, I am the daughter of a king, and my mother was... ."

"I have no time to listen to your life history," said Hodon. "Are you coming with me, or not?"

"Where are you going?"

He told her.

"I do not like your manner; and I shall probably not like you," said O-aa, "but I will come with you. You are better than nobody. Being the daughter of a king, I am accustomed to being treated with respect. All of my father's people... ."

"Come!" said Hodon. "You talk too much," and he started off again in the direction of the coast.

O-aa trotted along at his side. "I suppose you will delay me," grumbled Hodon.

"I can run as fast and as far as you can. My mother's father was the fastest runner in all his country, and my brother-"

"You are not your mother's father nor are you your brother," said Hodon. "I am only interested in how fast and how far you can run. If you cannot keep up with me, you will be left behind. The fate of the Emperor is much more important than yours."

"You don't call this running, do you?" demanded O-aa, derisively. "Why, when I was a little girl I used to run down and capture the orthopi. Everyone marveled at my swift-ness. Even my mother's father and my brother could not run down and capture the orthopi."

"You are probably lying," said Hodon, increasing his speed.

"For that, my brother will probably kill you," said O-aa. "He is a mighty warrior. He-
,,

Hodon was running so fast now that Oaa had not the breath for both running and talking, which was what Hodon had hoped for.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

GHAK THE HAIRY ONE, King of Sari, embarked a thousand warriors on two ships. They were much larger ships than the Sari which was the first successful ship that Perry had built and now practically obsolete. While the Sari had but two guns, one-pounders, one in the bow and the other in the stern, the newer ships had eight guns, four on each side on a lower deck; and they fired shells which occasionally burst when they were supposed to, but more often did not burst at all or prematurely. However, the cannon made a most satisfactory racket and emitted vast clouds of black smoke.

When Perry's first one-pounder was fired for the first time, the cannon ball rolled out and fell on the ground in front of the cannon. Innes said that this had its advantages, since there would be no waste of ammunition -they could just pick the balls up and use them over again; but-Perry's new pieces hurled a shell a full mile. He was very proud of them. The trouble was that the ships never found anyone to shoot at. There was no other known navy in Pellucidar except that of the Korsars, and Korsar is five thousand miles from Sari by water.

As Ghak's expeditionary force beat up the coast toward Kali, David Innes and his hundred warriors marched inland toward the village. Half of Innes's men were armed with the Perry musket, a smooth bore, muzzle loading flintlock; the other half carried bows and arrows. All had knives, and many carried the short spear that all Pellucidarians prefer. It hung by a leather thong about their necks and swung down their backs.

These men were all veterans-the corps elite of the Pellucidarian army. Perry had named them The Imperial Guard, and Innes had succeeded in inculcating some ideas of discipline upon their ruggedly individualistic egos. They marched now in a loose column of fours, and there were an advance guard and flankers. A hundred yards in front of the advance guard three warriors formed the point. Innes was taking no chance on an ambush.

They had covered about half the distance to Kali when the point halted at the summit of a little rise; then one of them turned and raced back toward the main body.

He came directly to Innes. "Many warriors are coming this way," he reported.

Innes disposed his men and advanced slowly. The musketeers were in the first line. As a rule the noise and smoke of one of their ragged volleys would frighten away almost any enemy; which was well; because they seldom hit anybody. After they fired, the archers moved up through their ranks and formed the first line while the musketeers reloaded.

But none of this was necessary now; as a messenger came racing back from the point to say that the force approaching them was friendly-Oose's warriors coming to welcome them to Kali and escort them to the village, Innes went forward to investigate personally. At the top of the rise he found a hairy caveman waiting for him.

Beyond, he saw a large force of warriors.

"Where is Oose?" he demanded.

"Oose is sick. He has a pain in his belly. He could not come; so he sent me to guide you to Kali."

"Why did he send so many warriors?"

"Because we are at war with Suvi, and Fash's warriors may be nearby."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Innes nodded. The explanation seemed reasonable. "Very well," he said, "lead the way."

His warriors advanced. Soon they were in contact with the warriors of the other party, and these offered them food. They seemed to wish to make friends. They moved among the warriors of The Imperial Guard, handing out food, passing rough jokes. They seemed much interested in the muskets, which they took in their hands and examined interestedly. Soon all the muskets of The Imperial Guard were in the hands of these friendly warriors, and four or five of them surrounded each member of the Guard.

HODON HAD TAKEN A short cut. He and O-aa had come over a hill through a forest, and now they halted at the edge of the forest and looked down into the little valley below. In the valley were hundreds of warriors. Hodon's keen eyes picked out David Innes among them; they saw the muskets of the musketeers. Hodon was puzzled. He knew that most of those warriors were the warriors of Fash of Suvi, but there was no battle. The men appeared to be mingling in peace and friendship.

"I cannot understand it," he said. He was thinking out loud.

"I can," said O-aa.

"What do you understand?" asked Hodon. "Tell me in a few words without any genealogical notes."

O-aa bridled. "My brother-" she began.

"Oh, bother your brother!" cried Hodon. "Tell me what you think you understand. You can tell me while we are walking down there to join David Innes."

"You would be fool enough to do that," the girl sneered.

"What do you mean?"

"That is one of Fash's tricks. Wait and see. If you go down, you will soon be back in the prison cave-if they do not kill you instead; which would be good riddance."

She had scarcely ceased speaking, when the leader of the friendly warriors voiced a war whoop and, with several of his men, leaped upon David Innes and bore him to the ground. At the signal, the rest of the friendly warriors leaped upon the members of The Imperial Guard whom they had surrounded. There was some resistance, but it was futile. A few men were killed and a number wounded, but the outcome was inevitable. Inside of five minutes the survivors of The Imperial Guard had their hands tied behind their backs.

Then Fash came from behind a bush where he had been hiding and confronted David Innes. "You call yourself Emperor," he said with a sneer. "You would like to be Emperor of all Pellucidar. You are too stupid. It is Fash who should be Emperor."

"You may have something there," said David Innes, "at least for the time being. What do you intend doing with us?"

"Those of your men who will promise to obey me shall live; I will kill the others."

"For every one of my men you kill, five Suvians shall die."

"You talk big, but you can do nothing. You are through, David Innes. You should have stayed in that other world you are said to have come from. It does not pay to come to Pellucidar and meddle. As for you, I do not know. Perhaps I shall kill you; perhaps I shall

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

hold you and trade you for ships and guns. Now that I am also King of Kali, I can make use of ships with which to conquer the rest of Pellucidar. Now I am Emperor! I shall build a city on the shore of the Lural Az and all Pellucidar shall soon know who is Emperor."

"You have a big mouth," said Innes. "Perhaps you are digging your grave with it."

"I have a big fist, too," growled Fash, and with that, he knocked David Innes down.

At word from Fash, a couple of warriors yanked Innes to his feet. He stood there, the blood running from his mouth. A shout of anger rose from the men of The Guard.

David Innes looked straight into the shifty eyes of Fash, the king of Suvi. "You had better kill me, Fash," he said, "before you unbind my wrists."

Hodon looked on in consternation. There was nothing that he could do. He moved back into the forest, lest some of Fash's warriors see him. Not that they could have caught him, but he did not wish them to know that their act had been witnessed by a friend of David Innes.

"You were right," he said to O-aa. "It was a trick of Fash's."

"I am always right," said O-aa. "It used to make my brother very angry."

"I can well understand that," said Hodon.

"My brother--"

"Yes, yes," said Hodon; "but haven't you any other relatives than a brother and a mother's father?"

"Yes, indeed," cried O-aa. "I have a sister. She is very beautiful. All the women in my mother's family have always been very beautiful. They say my mother's sister was the most beautiful woman in Pellucidar. I look just like her."

"So you have a mother's sister!" exclaimed Hodon. "The family tree is growing. I suppose that will give you something more to talk about."

"That is a peculiar thing about the women of my family," said O-aa; "they seldom talk, but when they do--"

"They never stop," said Hodon, sadly.

"I could talk if I had some one of intelligence to listen to me," said O-aa.

THE GAS BAG of Perry's balloon filled rapidly. It billowed upon the ground and grew larger. It rose above its basket. The eyes of the Sarians grew wide in astonishment. It grew fat stretching its envelope. It tugged at the guy ropes.

Perry shut off the gas. There were tears on the old man's cheeks as he stood there fondling the great thing with his eyes.

"It is a success!" he murmured. "The very first time it is a success."

Dian the Beautiful came and slipped her arm through his. "It is wonderful, Abner," she said; "but what is it for?"

"It is a balloon, my dear," explained Perry. "It will take people up into the air."

"What for?" asked Dian the Beautiful.

Perry cleared his throat. "Well, my dear, for many reasons."

"Yes?" inquired Dian. "What, for instance?"

"Come, come," said Perry; "you wouldn't understand."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"How could they get down again?" she asked.

"You see that big rope? It is attached to the bottom of the basket. The other end of the rope passes around the drum of this windlass we have built. After the balloon has ascended as high as we wish it to we turn the windlass and pull it down."

"Why would anyone wish to go up there?" asked Dian. "There is nothing up there but air and we have plenty of air down here."

"Just think of all the country you could see from way up there," said Perry. "You could see all the way to the Lural Az. With my binoculars, you might see all the way to Amoz."

"Could I see David, if he were coming back?"

"You could see his ships on the Lural Az a long way off," said Perry, "and you could see a large body of marching men almost as far as Greenwich."

"I shall go up in your balloon, Perry," said Dian the Beautiful. "Go and let your bi-bi-whatever you called them, that I may look through them and see if David is returning. I have slept many times and we have had no word from him since his messenger came summoning Ghak."

"I think that we had better test it first," said Perry. "There might be something wrong with it. There have been isolated instances where some of my inventions have not functioned entirely satisfactorily upon their initial trial."

"Yes," agreed Dian the Beautiful.

"I shall put a bag of earth of more than twice your weight in the basket, send it up, and haul it down. That should prove an entirely adequate test."

"Yes," said Dian, "and please hurry."

"You are sure you are not afraid to go up?" asked Perry.

"When was a woman of Sari ever afraid?" demanded Dian.

HODON RETRACED HIS steps to the summit of the cliff above Kali. He had a plan, but it all depended upon Fash's imprisoning David Innes in the cave on the upper ledge of the village.

Just before he reached the summit of the cliff, he stopped and told O-aa to remain hidden among some bushes. "And do not talk!" he commanded.

"Why?" asked O-aa. "Who are you to tell me that I cannot talk?"

"Never mind about that," said Hodon, "and don't start telling me about any of your relations. They make me sick, just remember this: if you talk, one of the warriors on guard may hear you and then there will be an investigation. And remember one more thing: if you talk before I come back here, I'll cut your throat. Can you remember that?"

"Wait until my brother--"

"Shut up!" snapped Hodon and walked away toward the top of the cliff.

As he neared it he got down on his belly and crawled. He wormed his way forward like an Apache Indian; and like an Apache Indian he carried a little bush in one hand. When he was quite close to the cliff edge, he held the little bush in front of his face and advanced but an inch at a time. At last he could peer over the edge and down upon the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

village of Kali. Once in position he did not move. He waited, waited with the infinite patience of primitive man.

He thought of David Innes, for whom he would have gladly laid down his life. He thought of O-aa and he smiled. She had spirit and the Sarians liked women with spirit. Also she was undeniably beautiful. The fact that she knew it detracted nothing from her charm. She would have been a fool if she hadn't known it, and a hypocrite if she had pretended that she did not know that she was beautiful. It was true that she talked too much, but a talkative woman was better than a sullen one.

Hodon thought that O-aa might be very desirable but he knew that she was not for him-she had too frankly emphasized her dislike of him. However one sometimes took a mate against her will. He would give the matter thought. One trouble with that was that David Innes did not approve of the old fashioned method of knocking a lady over the head with a club and dragging her off to one's cave. He had made very strict laws on the subject. Now no man could take a mate without the girl's consent.

As these thoughts were passing through his mind he saw warriors approaching the village. They kept coming into view from an opening in the forest. Yes, it was the Suvians with their prisoners. He saw David Innes walking with his head up, just as he always walked in paths of peace or paths of war. No one ever saw David Innes' chin on his chest. Hodon was very proud of him.

There was a brief halt at the foot of the cliff, and then some of the prisoners were herded toward the cliff and up the ladders. Would David Innes be one of these? So much depended on it that Hodon felt his heart beating a little faster.

All the prisoners could not be accommodated in the prison cave on the upper ledge. Some of them would have to be confined elsewhere or destroyed. Hodon was sure that no member of The Imperial Guard would accept Fash's offer and prove a traitor to the Empire.

Yes! At last here came David Innes! The guards were particularly cruel to him. They prodded him with spears as he climbed the rickety ladders. They had removed the bonds from his wrists, but they had seen that he was at a safe distance from Fash before they did so.

Up and up he climbed. At last he was on the topmost ladder. Inwardly, Hodon whooped for joy. Now there was a chance. Of course his plan was full of bugs, but there was one chance in a hundred that it might succeed -one wild chance.

Just one little hour of night would have simplified things greatly but Hodon knew nothing of night. From the day of his birth he had known only one long, endless day, with the stationary sun hanging perpetually at zenith. Whatever he did now, as always, would have to be done in broad daylight among a people who had no set hours for sleeping; so that at least a half of them could be depended upon to be awake and watchful at all times.

He watched until he saw David Innes enter the prison cave; then he crawled back to O-aa. She was fast asleep! How lovely she looked. Her slim, brown body was almost naked, revealing the perfection of its contours. Hodon knelt beside her. For a moment he forgot David Innes, duty, honor. He seized O-aa and lifted her in his arms. He pressed his lips to hers. She awakened with a start. With the speed and viciousness of a cat, she

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

struck-she struck him once across the mouth with her hand, and then her dagger sprang from its sheath.

Hodon leaped quickly back, but not quite quickly enough; the basalt blade ripped a six-inch slash in his chest. Hodon grinned. "Well done," he said. "Some day you are going to be my mate, and I shall be very proud of you." "I would as soon mate with a jalok," she said. "You will mate with me of your own free will," said Hodon, "and now come and help me."

"YOU THINK you understand perfectly what you are to do?" asked Hodon a few minutes later, after carefully explaining his plan to O-aa.

"You are bleeding," said O-aa.

"It is nothing but a flesh wound," said Hodon.

"Let me get some leaves and stop it."

"Later," said Hodon. "You are sure you understand?"

"Why did you want to kiss me?" asked O-aa. "Was it just because I am so beautiful?"

"If I tell you, will you answer my question?"

"Yes," said O-aa.

"I think it was just because you are Oaa," said Hodon.

O-aa sighed. "I understand all that I am to do," she said. "Let us commence."

Together they gathered several large and small pieces of sandstone from a weathered outcropping, and inched them up to the very edge of the cliff. One very large piece was directly over the ladder which led to the next ledge below; others were above the mouth of the prison cave.

When this was accomplished, Hodon went into the forest and cut several long lianas and dragged them close to the cliff; then he fastened an end of each of them to trees which grew a few yards back.

"Now!" he whispered to O-aa.

"Do not think," she said, "because I have helped you and have not slipped my dagger between your ribs, that I do not bate you. Wait until my brother-"

"Yes," said Hodon. "After we have finished this you may tell me all about your brother. You will have earned the right. You have been splendid, O-aa. You will make a wonderful mate."

"I shall make a wonderful mate," agreed O-aa, "but not for you."

"Come on," said Hodon, "and keep your mouth shut-if you can."

She gave him a venomous look, but she followed him toward the edge of the cliff. Hodon looked over to be sure that everything was as he hoped it would be. He nodded his head at O-aa, and grinned.

He pushed the great stone nearer the edge, and O-aa did the same with some of her smaller ones. She watched Hodon very closely, and when she saw him pushing his over the edge, she stood up and hurled one of hers down.

The big stone struck the two guards squatting at the top of the ladder, carrying them and the ladder crashing down from ledge to ledge, carrying other ladders with them.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Hodon ran to the rocks that O-aa was hurling down, and O-aa ran to the lianas and dropped them over the edge. Hodon was calling David Innes by name. One of the other two guards had been hit and had fallen over the cliff; then David Innes and some of the other prisoners ran from the cave.

Only one guard opposed them. Neither O-aa or Hodon had been able to strike him with a rock. David Innes rushed him, and the guard met him on the narrow ledge with his short spear. As he lunged at Innes, the latter seized the weapon and struggled to wrench it from the Suvian's grasp. The two men wrestled for the weapon on the brink of eternity. At any moment either of them might be precipitated to the foot of the cliff. The other prisoners seemed too stunned or too anxious to escape to go to Innes' assistance, but not Hodon. Sensing the danger to his chief, he slid down one of the lianas and ran to Innes' side. With a single blow he knocked the Suvian over the edge of the cliff; then he pointed to the lianas.

"Hurry!" he said. "They are already starting up the Canyon to climb the cliff and head us off."

Each on a different liana, the two men clambered to the summit. Already most of the Kalias had disappeared into the forest. Innes had been the only Sarian confined on the upper ledge. Oose had not run away. He and another Kalian were talking with O-aa. Oose's companion was a squat, bearded fellow with a most unprepossessing countenance. He looked like a throwback to a Neanderthal type. As Hodon and Innes approached the three, they heard Oaa say, "I will not!"

"Yes, you will," snapped Oose. "I am your father and your king. You will do as I tell you. Blug is a mighty hunter, a mighty fighter. He will make a fine mate. He has a large cave and three other women to lighten your labors."

O-aa stamped a sandalled foot. "I tell you I will not. I would just as soon mate with a Sagoth."

Now, the Sagoths are those half human gorilla men who did the strong arm work for the Mahars, the reptiles who dominated Pellucidar before David Innes drove them away—at least away from that portion of the inner world of which he was Emperor. Oaa could scarcely have voiced a more comprehensive insult.

Blug growled angrily. "Enough!" he said. "I take her." He reached for O-aa, but Hodon stepped between them and struck Blug's hand away.

"You do not take her," he said. "O-aa chooses her own mate."

Blug, being more or less of an inarticulate lowbrow, with a short temper, replied to words with action. He swung a terrific blow at Hodon that might well have felled a bos, had there been a bos there and had the blow landed; but there was no bos and the blow did not land. Hodon ducked under it, picked Blug up and hurled him heavily to the ground.

Blug was surprised and so was Oose, for Hodon looked like no match for the massive Blug. Hodon's muscles rolled smoothly beneath his bronzed skin—deceptively. They had great strength and they possessed agility. Blug had only strength; but he had courage, too—the courage of stupidity. He scrambled to his feet and charged Hodon—charged like a wild bull. And this time Hodon struck him full in the mouth and dropped him in his tracks.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Enough of this!" snapped David Innes. "If you stand here fighting, we shall all be captured."

"Enough," said Oose to Blug.

"I shall kill him later, then," said Blug.

"What-again?" asked Hodon. He looked about him.

"Where is O-aa?" he asked.

O-aa had fled. While the two men fought, she had run away. Maybe she thought, as Blug and Oose had thought, that Blug would easily kill Hodon.

"I did not see her go," said Oose.

"When I find her, I shall beat her and give her to Blug."

"Not if I'm around," said Hodon.

"You should not interfere in the affairs of others, Hodon," counselled David.

"It is my affair," said Hodon.

Innes shrugged. "Very well," he said; "but if it's your own funeral, too, do not say that I did not warn you. Now we must get away from here."

"There are some caves farther up the coast," said Oose, "that we have used at other times that Kali has been invaded. My people have probably gone there. We had better go there also."

"I shall remain near here," said Innes. "Many of my warriors are prisoners here. I cannot desert them."

"I will stay with you," said Hodon.

Oose and Blug moved away into the forest. "If you are around here when I come back," said the latter to Hodon, "I will kill you. I will bring my mate back to see me do it. I shall find O-aa at the other caves, and there I shall take her."

"You have a big mouth," said Hodon. "It fills so much of your head that there is no room for brains."

Blug did not retort. He could think of nothing to say, his powers of repartee being limited; so he disappeared into the forest wrapped in the gloomy cloak of anger.

"I hear the Suvians coming," said Innes.

"Yes," replied Hodon. "Come with me. I have become a little familiar with parts of this land, and I know where we can find a hiding place."

"I do not like to hide," said David Innes.

"Nor I; but two men cannot fight five hundred."

"You are right," said Innes. "Lead the way. I will follow you."

They moved away very quietly, Hodon trying to find rocks to step on wherever he could and Innes stepping always in the exact spots that Hodon stepped. When they came to a little stream, Hodon entered it and walked up its bed. It would take an excellent tracker to follow them at all.

PERRY BEAMED With satisfaction, and Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands ecstatically. Many other Sarians, mostly women and children, stood open mouthed and goggle eyed. Every head was tilted back, every eye looked straight aloft to where a great gas

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

bag partially eclipsed the eternal noonday sun. The balloon was a success.

Its basket loaded with rock, it had risen at the end of its rope, as four stalwart Sarians payed out on the windlass. Everyone was surprised, none more so than Abner Perry; for this was the first one of his "inventions" that functioned on its initial trial. He would not have been greatly surprised had it instead of going up bored itself into the ground.

"This is a great day for Pellucidar, Dian," he said. "Won't David be surprised!"

True enough David was due for a big surprise.

As those who had been left behind in Sari watched the swaying balloon, like little children with a new toy, Ghak the Hairy One and his thousand fighting men sailed on toward Kali.

And Hodon led David Innes to a little canyon into the head of which tumbled a mountain brook in a waterfall of exquisite beauty. Continually watered by the spray and warmed by the never failing sun, lush vegetation swarmed up the side of the cliff and spread out on the floor of the valley. Great sprays of orchids trailed down the rocky face of the cliff, gorgeous corsages pinned to the breast of the mountain. Flowers that withered and died forever on the outer crust eons ago challenged the beauty of the orchids, and hidden behind this mass of greenery and blooms was a little cave—a cave that could be defended by a single warrior against an army of stone age men.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Innes, "and not far from Kali. We can stay here until Ghak comes. We will take turns watching for him. Really, we should watch by the sea; but I want to be where I can also watch Kali; here my warriors are imprisoned. Perhaps an opportunity will come for us to get them out of the prison caves."

Fruit and nuts grew in abundance on the trees and shrubs of the little canyon; but fighting men require meat; and one must have weapons to have meat. These two had not even a stone knife between them, but the first men had no weapons originally. They had to make them.

Innes and Hodon went into the little stream and hunted around until they found a large mussel. They pried it open with a sharp stone, and each took a half shell. With these they cut two pieces of bamboo-like arborescent grass to form the hafts of two spears. Searching again they collected a number of stones: soft stones, hard stones, flat stones, stones with sharp edges; and with some of these they chipped and scraped at others until they had fashioned two spear heads and a couple of crude knives. While Hodon was finding the toughest fibers with which to bind the spear heads to the hafts, Innes made a bow and some arrows, for this was one of his favorite weapons.

How long all this took, of course there was no way of telling, only that they ate several times and slept once. All in all, it may have taken them a week of outer earthly time, or half a day, or a year. Occasionally one of them would go to a high point in the hills and look out across the country toward the coast always hoping to see Ghak the Hairy One and his warriors.

Hodon was hunting. He had gone out northeast of Kali a little farther this time than usual; for his luck had not been good. He had seen some game-red deer and orthopi the little primitive three toed horse that once ranged the outer crust-but something had always happened to frighten them away before he could get within spear range.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Of a sudden he heard a terrific roaring, and the crash of a heavy body coming through the undergrowth of the forest. Hodon looked for a tree that could be easily and swiftly scaled. He knew the author of that roar. It was a cave lion and the less business he had with a cave lion the happier he would be and the longer he would live.

He had just found a nice tree when he saw something burst from the underbrush in the direction from which the roaring was coming, but it was not a cave lion. It was O-aa. She was running like a scared, rabbit and right behind her was the cave lion.

Hodon forgot the tree. The lion was not making as good progress through the underbrush as was O-aa. She was leaping as lightly and almost as swiftly as a springbok. Hodon ran to meet her.

"Go back!" she cried. "It is Ta-ho."

Hodon could see that it was Ta-ho, but he didn't go back. As O-aa passed him, he knelt and jammed the butt of his spear into the ground, holding the haft at an angle, the stone point ahead of him.

The spear was a little short for the purpose for which he was using it. With a long spear some great hunters had killed the cave lion and the sabertooth tiger thus; but with a short spear such as his, one would be almost sure to be mauled to death before death came to the beast. However, Hodon had never hesitated from the moment that he had seen O-aa.

The great lion rose snarling above him, its face a hideous mask of savagery; and then its momentum hurled it upon the spear point. Instantly Hodon leaped to one side and drew his puny stone knife; then he threw himself upon the back of the pain maddened beast tangling the fingers of one hand in its mane while with the other he plunged his knife through the thick hide into the beast's side.

The lion threw itself from side to side. It turned to seize the man-thing. It rolled upon the ground to dislodge him; and then, quite suddenly, it rolled over on its side. The spear had pierced its heart.

Hodon stood up and looked around him, searching for O-aa. She was nowhere in sight. He called her by name, but there was no answer. So, he had risked his life for her and she had run away from him! At that moment Hodon almost became a misogynist.

He started out to look for her with the intention of giving her a good beating when he found her. Being an excellent tracker it did not take him long to pick up her trail. He followed it as silently as though he were stalking the wariest of game for that he knew she would be.

Beyond the edge of the forest he saw her. Evidently she thought that she had eluded him, for she was walking along quite nonchalantly. The sight of her impertinent little back goaded Hodon to fury. He decided that a beating was far from adequate punishment; so he drew his stone knife from its scabbard and ran quietly after her determined to cut her throat.

After all, Hodon the Fleet One was only a cave man of the stone age. His instincts were primitive and direct, but they were sometimes faulty-as in this instance. He thought that the feeling that he harbored for O-aa was hate, when, as a matter of fact, it was love. Had he not loved her, he would not have cared that she ran away from him while he was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

risking his life for her. There are few sentiments more closely allied and inextricably intermingled than love and hate, but of this Hodon was not aware. At that moment he hated O-aa with utter single-mindedness and abandon.

He caught up with O-aa and seized her by the hair, spinning her around so that he looked down into her upturned face. That was a mistake, if he really wished to kill her. Only a man with a stone where his heart should have been could have slit Oaa's throat while looking into her face.

O-aa's eyes were very wide. "You are going to kill me?" she asked. "When my brother--"

"Why did you run away from me?" demanded Hodon. "I might have been killed."

"I did not run away until I saw Ta-ho roll over dead," said O-aa.

"Why did you run away then?" Hodon's knife hand hung at his side, and he loosened his grasp on O-aa's hair. Hodon's rage was oozing out through his eyes as they looked into the eyes of O-aa.

"I ran away because I am afraid of you. I do not wish to mate with you or any other man until I am ready. No man has won me yet."

"I have fought for you," Hodon reminded her. "I have killed Ta-ho in your defense."

"Ta-ho is not a man," said O-aa, as though that settled the whole matter.

"But I fought Blug for you. Every time I fight for you you run away. Why do you do that?"

"That time, I was running away from Blug. I thought he would kill you and then come after me; and anyway, fighting Blug was nothing-you didn't kill him. I saw Blug and my father afterward, but they did not see me."

"So, I shall have to kill a man before you will mate with me?" demanded Hodon.

"Why, of course. I think you will have to kill Blug. I do not understand why he did not kill you when you fought. If I were you I should keep out of Blug's way. He is a very great fighter. I think he would break you in two. I should like to see that fight."

Hodon looked at her for a long minute; then he said, "I think you are not worth having for a mate."

O-aa's eyes flashed. "It is a good thing for you that my brother did not hear you say that," she said with asperity.

"There you go," said Hodon, "dragging in your family again. I am sick and tired of hearing of your family all the time."

As they talked, unconscious of any but themselves, six strange looking creatures crept toward them through the underbrush.

VII

THE FOUR Sarians at the windlass wound the balloon down to earth, and held it there while others removed the stone ballast. Everyone clustered around, examining it and heaping praise on Abner Perry. And Perry was so proud and happy that he felt like doing a little dance.

"And now," said Dian, "I shall go up."

"Perhaps you had better wait until David comes," counselled Perry. "Something might

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

happen.”

“It took all that rock up,” argued Dian, “and I do not weigh as much as the rock.”

“That is not the point,” said Perry. “It would take you up, all right; but I don’t think you should go until after David gets back. As I said before, something might happen.”

“Well, I am going,” said Dian.

“What if I forbade it?” asked Perry.

“I should go anyhow. Am I not Empress of Pellucidar?” She smiled as she said it; but Perry knew that, Empress of Pellucidar or not, Dian the Beautiful would go up in the balloon if she wished to.

“Very well,” he said; “I’ll let you go up a little way.”

“You’ll let me go up to the end of the rope,” she said. “I want to see if David is coming home.”

“Very well,” said Perry, resignedly. “Get in.”

The other Sarians clustered around Dian as she clambered into the basket. Here was a new experience far beyond anything that they had ever imagined, and Dian the Beautiful was about to have it. They all envied her. They made little jokes and told her what to look for when she got up to the sun. They asked her all the questions outer Earth people might have asked under similar circumstances—all but one: nobody asked her if she were afraid. One does not ask a Sarian if he is afraid.

Perry signalled to the four men at the windlass and the balloon commenced to rise. Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands happily. “Faster!” she called to the four men at the windlass.

“Slower!” said Perry. “Take it easy.”

Up and up went the great gas bag. A little breeze caught it, and it swayed to, and fro. Dian felt very small up there all alone with that huge thing billowing above her.

“Can you see David?” some one shouted.

“Not yet,” shouted Dian, “but I can see the Lural Az. Send me up higher!”

Soon almost all the rope was out, and Perry was glad; for then he could start pulling the balloon down. He was anxious to see Dian the Beautiful on terra firma again. Perhaps Perry had a premonition.

THE TERRIBLE CREATURES crept closer and closer to Hodon and O-aa. They were men, naked black men with long, prehensile tails. Their brows protruded above small, close-set eyes; and there was practically no head above the brows. Short, stiff black hair grew straight out from their skulls; but their outstanding feature was a pair of tusks that curved down from the upper jaw to below the chin.

“I wish,” O-aa was saying, “that you would go away and leave me alone. I do not like you. If my brother-”

It was then that the creatures charged, roaring like beasts. With hands and tails, they seized Hodon and O-aa; and the two were helpless in their grasp. Chattering and jabbering among themselves they dragged their prisoners off into the forest.

Hodon tried to talk to them; but they did not understand him, nor could he understand them. They were very rough, slapping and cuffing their captives without provoca-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tion.

"Now we shall die," said O-aa.

"What makes you think so?" asked Hodon. "If they had intended to kill us, they could have done so when they attacked us."

"Do you not know what they are?" asked O-aa.

"No," said Hodon. "I have never seen nor heard of such creatures before."

"They are the sabertooth men," she said. Of course she did not use the word saber. What she said was, roughly, the taragtooth men-the tarag being the sabertooth tiger. "They are man eaters," she added for good measure.

"You mean they are taking us home to eat?" demanded Hodon.

"Exactly," said O-aa.

"If you had come with me long ago, this would not have happened to you," said Hodon.

"Oh, there are worse things than being eaten by a saber-tooth man," rejoined Oaa.

"Maybe you are right," agreed Hodon; "having to hear about your family, for instance."

"My brother is a mighty fighter," said O-aa. "He could break you in two, and my sister is very beautiful. You have no women in Sari so beautiful as my sister. She is almost as beautiful as I. My mother's father was so strong that he could carry the carcass of a full grown bos on his back."

"Now, I know you are lying," said Hodon. "Why must you lie so much, and always about your family? I am not interested in your family. I am only interested in you."

"My father is a king," said O-aa.

"He can be a Sagoth, for all I care. I do not wish to mate with your father."

"Now you will never mate with anybody," said Oaa. "Instead, you will be eaten by a sabertooth man and his mate."

"Maybe the same man will eat us both," said Hodon, grinning. "Then we shall be truly mated."

"If he does that to me I will give him a pain in his belly," said O-aa.

"You do not like me very well," said Hodon.

"You are very stupid, if you have only just discovered that," replied O-aa.

"I do not understand why you don't like me. I am not bad to look at. I would be kind to you, and I can certainly protect you."

"This looks like it," said O-aa.

Hodon subsided.

Two of the sabertooth men each had his tail wrapped around the neck of one of the captives. Thus they, dragged them along, while other sabertooth men pushed, and slapped, and kicked their prisoners from the rear. The grotesque blacks kept jabbering. They reminded Hodon of the little hairy men who lived in the trees of the forests.

The cliff of Kali is the last rampart of a range of mountains that extended toward the northeast, parallel with the coast of the Lural Az. It was into these mountains that O-aa

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and Hodon were being dragged. The terrain became rougher as they ascended, the limestone formation giving way to volcanic rock. Extinct volcanos were visible on either hand. The vegetation was sparse and poor. It was a tough country.

Buffeted and bruised, the prisoners were dragged at last to a yawning hole in the side of a mountain. Inside it was dark as a pocket, but the sabertooth men did not even pause on the threshold. Still jabbering, they entered the cavern and raced along as though in broad daylight. Neither O-aa nor Hodon could see a thing. They felt the smooth surface of the rock beneath their sandals and they could tell that they were ascending. Presently the ascent became so steep that they would have fallen back had not their captors supported them. Up and up they went, dragged by their necks. In the grip of the choking tails they were gasping for breath.

At last the ascent became absolutely perpendicular and here were long lianas depending from above and there was daylight. Above them they could see a round opening into which the sun shone, and they could see that they were ascending a circular shaft. They did not know it, but they were in a volcanic tube.

The sabertooth men swarmed up the lianas, dragging O-aa and Hodon with them; and when they reached the top of the tube both their prisoners were unconscious. Then they released them, and the two lay as though dead where they had fallen.

DIAN THE BEAUTIFUL looked out across forest and rolling hills and fertile plains. She saw great herds of bos and red deer and herbivorous dinosaurs feeding on the lush vegetation. She saw the Lural Az curving upward, like Professor Einstein's time and space, until it was simply lost in the distance; for there is no horizon in Pellucidar. She saw Anoroc Island, where the copper, colored Mezops dwell in their tree houses; and beyond Anoroc, the Luana Islands. She could have seen Greenwich had it been more than an imaginary spot on an imaginary map. But she saw no sign of David Innes, though she strained her eyes until the tears came to them.

The four men at the windlass kept letting out more and more rope, their eyes on the balloon and not on the drum. Perry was watching the balloon, too. He felt that Dian the Beautiful had gone high enough and had been up long enough to have seen all that there was to see; so he turned to the men at the windlass to order them to haul the balloon down. What he saw brought a scream of horror from his throat.

AT THE SAME TIME, David Innes stood upon a promontory above Kali and looked out toward the Lural Az. He was looking for Ghak the Hairy One, but his search was no more successful than had Dian's been. Slowly he made his way back to the hidden canyon. Hodon would have returned with meat, he thought; and they would feast, but Hodon was not there.

David went into the cave and slept, and when he awoke there was still no sign of Hodon. So David went out and made a kill himself. He ate many times and slept twice more, and still Hodon had not returned. Now David became worried, for he knew that Hodon would have returned had all been well with him. He determined to go and search for him, though he knew that it would be like searching for a needle in a hay stack.

He found Hodon's almost obliterated tracks, and he came upon the carcass of the cave lion. The dagger wounds in the beast's side and the spear wound in its breast told a

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

graphic story. Then he discovered the prints of O-aa's little sandals.

What he read when he came to the spot at which the two had been captured by the sabertooth men filled him with apprehension. He saw great splayed, manlike footprints, and the trail of the party leading away to the northeast. For the most part, the spoor of O-aa and Hodon was obliterated by that of their captors; but David Innes saw enough to know that a party of creatures unknown to him had captured Oaa and Hodon.

There was but one thing to do: he must follow. This he did until the trail entered the dark mouth of the volcanic tube. He went in a short distance, but he could neither see nor hear anything; he felt a strong wind sucking in past him toward the interior of the cave. He came out and examined the terrain. Above him lay the slope of an extinct volcano. He could see the rim of the crater sharply defined against the blue of the sky. Suddenly he had an inspiration, and he commenced the ascent of the mountain.

When Hodon and O-aa regained consciousness they were still lying where they had fallen. All around them rose the walls of a volcanic crater, the level floor of which was covered with verdure. In the center was a small lake of blue water. Rude shelters were dotted about.

They found themselves surrounded by sabertooth people-men, women, and children. There was much jabbering in the strange, monkey-like language of these hideous people. They snarled and growled at one another and occasionally one of them would try to grab either O-aa or Hodon with a long, prehensile tail. Three or four large males stood close to the captives, and every time one of their fellows tried to seize either of them, he would be set upon and chased away. It was apparent to Hodon that they were being guarded, but why?

After they regained consciousness, these guards jerked them to their feet and led them away toward one of the shacks-an open structure with a flimsy grass roof. Here a large male squatted on the ground, and beside him was the strangest looking human being either Hodon or O-aa had ever seen. He was a little, wizened old man with a white beard that almost concealed the rest of his features. He had no teeth, and his eyes were the eyes of a very old man.

"Well," he said, looking them over, "you're certainly in a fix. Back in Cape Cod, we'd say you was in a Hell of a fix; but we ain't back in Cape Cod, and you never heard of Hell, unless this here place is it, which I sometimes believe; for doesn't the Good Book tell us that people go down to Hell? or doesn't it? Well, I dunno; but I came down to get to this here place, an' I don't believe Hell could be much worse." He spoke in Pellucidarian with a Cape Cod accent. "Well," he continued, taking a breath, "here you are. Do you know what's goin' to happen to you?"

"No," said Hodon; "do you?"

"Well, they'll probably fatten you up and eat you. That's what they usually do. They might keep you a long time. They're funny that way. You see they ain't no such thing as time down here; so how's a body to know how long it will be before you get fat or before they eat you? God only knows how long I been here. I had black hair and a good set o' teeth when I come, but look at me now! Maybe they'll keep you until your teeth fall out. I hope so, because I get danged lonesome for company down here. These here things

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

aren't very good company."

"Why haven't they I eaten you?" asked Hodon.

"Well, that there's a long story. I'll tell you all about it-if they don't eat you too quick."

The large sabertooth man sitting beside the old man now commenced to jabber at him, and the old man jabbered back in the same strange tongue; then he turned to Hodon.

"He wants to know where you come from and if there's more like you real handy. He says that if you'll guide his people to your village, he won't have you killed right away."

"Tell him I've got to rest first," said Hodon. "Maybe I can think of a village where the people are all nice and fat."

The old man turned and translated this to the sabertooth man, who replied at some length.

"He says that's all right, and he'll send some of his people with you right away."

"Tell him I've got to rest first," said Hodon.

After some further conversation between the sabertooth man and the old man, the latter said: "You can come with me now. I'm to look after you until you have rested."

He got up, and Hodon and O-aa followed him to another shelter, which was much more substantially built than the others.

"This is my cabin," said the old man. "Sit down and make yourselves at home. I built this myself. Got all the comforts of home!" The comforts of home were a bunk filled with dried grass, a table, and a bench.

"Tell me how you got here, and why they don't eat you," said Hodon.

"Well, the reason they don't eat me, or rather the reason they didn't eat me at first, was because I saved the life of that fellow you seen sitting beside me. He's chief. I think about the only reason they don't eat me now is because I'm too damned old and tough.

"Now, as to how I got here, I come from a place you never even heard of in a world you never heard of. You don't know it, but you're living in the center of a round ball; and on the outside is another world, entirely different from this one. Well, I come from that other world on the outside.

"I was a seafarin' man up there. Used to go whalin' up around the Arctic. Last time I went was an awful open summer up there. We went farther north than we'd ever been before, and no ice-just a great open polar sea as far as the eye could reach.

"Well, everything was lovely till we run into the worst dod-blasted storm you ever see; and the Dolly Dorcas was wrecked. The Dolly Dorcas was my ship. I dunno what become of the others, but there was eight of us in the boat I was in. We had food an' water an' a compass an' sails as well as oars; but still it didn't look very good. We was way up in the Arctic Ocean an' winter comin' on. We could just about kiss ourselves goodbye.

"We sailed what we thought was south for a long time, and all the time the compass kept acting stranger an' stranger. You'd thought the dod-blasted thing had gone crazy. Then we ran out o' food, an' the fust thing you knowed we commenced to eat one another-startin in on the weakest fust. Then some of 'em went crazy; an' two jumped overboard, which was a dirty trick when they knew we craved meat so bad.

"Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, finally they wasn't nobody left

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but me; and then, dodblast it, if the weather didn't commence to get warmer, and pretty soon I sighted land and found fruits and nuts, and fresh water. Believe me, it was just in time too; for I was so doggone hungry I was thinkin' of cuttin' off one of my legs an' eatin' it."

O-aa sat wide eyed and wondering, drinking in every word. Hodon had never known her to be silent for so long. At last she had met her match.

"What's become of your brother and your mother's father?" asked Hodon.

"Eh! What's that?" demanded the old man.

"I was speaking to O-aa," said Hodon.

"Well, don't interrupt me. You talk too much. Now, where was I? You got me all confused."

"You were thinking of eating your leg," said O-aa.

"Yes, yes. Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, I was in Pellucidar. How I ever lived, I'll be doggone if I know; but I did. I got in with one tribe after another, an' none of 'em killed me for one reason or another. I learned the language an' how to hunt with spears. I made out somehow. Finally I stole a canoe an' set sail on the biggest doggone ocean you ever seen. My beard was a yard long when I landed near here an' got captured by these things.

"Well, I better start feedin' you an' fattenin' you up. I reckon this gal will be pretty tasty eatin' right soon." He reached out and pinched O-aa's flesh. "Yum!" he exclaimed. "She's just about right now."

"Do you eat human flesh?" demanded Hodon.

"Well, you see I sort o' acquired a taste for it after the Dolly Dorcas was wrecked. Ole Bill was a mite tough an' rank, but there was a Swede I et who was just about the nicest eatin' you ever see. Yes, I eat what the Lord furnishes. I reckon I'm goin' to enjoy both of you."

"I thought you said you hoped they wouldn't eat us, because you would like to have our company," said O-aa.

"Yes, I'm sort o' torn between two loves, as the feller said: I loves to eat an' I loves to talk."

"We like to listen," said Hodon.

"Yes," agrees O-aa; "we could listen to you forever."

WHAT PERRY HAD SEEN that had brought the scream to his lips was the end of the rope slipping from the drum. He had forgotten to have it made fast! He sprang forward and seized at the rope, but the free balloon leaped upward carrying the rope's end far above him. Of course his gesture was futile, as a dozen men could not have held the great gas bag that Perry had made.

The old man looked up at the great balloon, rapidly growing smaller as it rose; then he sat down, and, covering his face with his hands, commenced to sob; for he knew that Dian the Beautiful was already as good as dead. No power on earth or within it could save her now.

How high she would be carried he could not even guess, nor how far from Sari. She

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

would doubtless die from lack of oxygen, and then her body would be carried for a thousand miles or more before the bag would lose sufficient gas to bring it down.

He loved Dian the Beautiful as he would have loved a daughter, and he knew that David Innes worshipped her. Now he had killed Dian and wrecked David's life-the two people he loved most in the world. His silly inventions had done a little good and some harm, but whatever good they had accomplished had been wiped out by this. Worst of all, he realized, was his criminal absent-minded carelessness.

Dian felt the sudden upward rush of the balloon. She looked down over the edge of the basket and instantly realized what had happened. Everything was growing smaller down there. Soon she could no longer distinguish people. She wondered what would become of her. Perhaps she would be carried up to the sun and incinerated. She saw that the wind was carrying the balloon in a south-westerly direction.

She did not realize the greatest error of all that Perry had made; neither did Perry. He had arranged no rip cord on the gas bag. With that, Dian could have let gas out of the bag gradually and made a landing within a comparatively few miles from Sari. Perry was always leaving some essential thing off of everything he built. His first musket had no trigger.

Dian the Beautiful guessed that she was as good as dead. She cried, but not because she was afraid to die. She cried because she would never see David again.

And David, far away, reached the rim of the crater and looked over. Below him, scarcely a hundred feet, he saw a round valley, green with verdure. He saw a little lake and grass thatched shelters and people. He saw Hodon and O-aa. His surmise had been correct.

He saw the strange sabertooth people. There were a couple of hundred of them. How could he, single handed, rescue Hodon and O-aa from such an overwhelming number of enemies?

David Innes was resourceful; but the more he cudgeled his brains, the more hopeless a solution of his problem appeared. It would profit them nothing if he went down into the crater. That would mean simply his own capture; then he could do nothing for them.

He examined the crater closely. The inside walls were perpendicular and unscalable in all but a single place. There the wall had crumbled inward, the rubble forming an incline that reached to the top of the rim that was little more than fifty feet above the floor of the crater at that point. There was an avenue of escape, but how could he call Hodon's attention to it. How could he create a diversion that would take the attention of their captors from them long enough for them to make a break for freedom. Suddenly he recalled the wind rushing past him as he had stood in the darkness of the cavern that was the entrance to the crater. He turned and started down the mountainside.

THE OLD MAN HAD been talking constantly. Even O-aa could not get a word in edgewise, but at last he paused for a moment, probably to refresh his mind concerning the past, in which he lived.

Hodon seized upon this moment to voice a suggestion that had been in his mind for some time. "Why don't you escape?" he asked the old man.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Eh? What? Escape? Why-er-I haven't thought of it since before my last bicuspid dropped out. But of course I couldn't escape."

"I don't see why not," said Hodon. "I don't see why the three of us couldn't escape. Don't you see that low place there? We could run up there in no time if you could find some way to get their attention somewhere else."

"M-m-m," murmured the old man thoughtfully. "Sometimes many of them are asleep at the same time. It might be done, but I doubt it. Anyway, what good would it do me to escape? I'd only be killed by the first tribe that captured me if some of the beasts didn't get me before."

"No," said Hodon. "I would take you to Sari. They would treat you well there. You might meet some old friends. There are two men from Hartford, Connecticut there."

The old man became instantly alert. "What do you know about Hartford, Connecticut?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said Hodon, "but these men do. I have heard them speak of it many times."

"How did they get down here? That must be a story like mine. I'll bet they'd like to hear my story."

"I know they would," said O-aa, who was nobody's fool. "I think you ought to come with us."

"I'll think it over," said the old man.

David Innes made his way to the entrance to the tube. He gathered dry wood and leaves and green grass, and he piled it far into the tube, with the grass on top. Then he made fire and lighted it. As soon as he saw that it was burning freely, he ran from the tube and started up the side of the mountain as fast as he could go.

When he reached the top and looked over he saw smoke rising from the opening into the tube. Already a jabbering crowd of sabertooth men were gathering about it. Others were joining them. David was just about to risk everything by shouting to Hodon to run for the low place in the rim, when he saw O-aa, Hodon, and another walking toward it. He saw that the third member of the party was not one of the natives; so he assumed it must be another prisoner.

The diversion that Hodon had hoped for had occurred almost miraculously, and the three lost no time in taking advantage of it.

"You are sure, are you, that these men from Hartford, Connecticut, are where we are going?" demanded the old man. "Dodburn you, if they ain't, I'll eat you the first chance I get."

"Oh, they're there all right," said O-aa.

"I saw them just before we left."

Hodon looked at her in amazement not unmixed with admiration. "We may see one of them before we get to Sari," he said. "He was with me just before we were captured."

"I hope so," said the old man. "I'd sure like to see some one from Hartford. By gum, I'd even like to see some one from Kansas."

"Oh," said O-aa with a shrug. "We know lots of people from Kansas. You can see all you want."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Hodon's expression turned to one of awe, but now they were at the base of the shelving rubble. He looked back. Every single sabertooth was gathered around the smoking vent; not an eye was turned in their direction. "Start up slowly," he cautioned. "Do not start to hurry unless they discover what we are doing; then you'll really have to climb. Once on the outside you and I, O-aa, can outdistance any of them, but I don't know about the old man."

"Listen, son," said that worthy. "I can run circles around you and all your family. Why, when I was a young man they used to race me against race horses. I'd give 'em two lengths start and beat 'em in a mile."

Hodon didn't know what a horse was; but he had an idea that whatever it was the old man was lying; so he said nothing. He was thinking that between O-aa and the old man it was a toss-up.

They reached the summit without being detected; and as they started down, Hodon saw David coming toward him. He hurried forward to meet him, "It was you who started the fire that made the smoke, wasn't it? But how did you know we were in the crater?"

"Is this one of the men from Hartford?" demanded the little old man.

"Yes," said Hodon, "but don't start telling him the story of your life now. Wait until we get out of reach of your friends."

DIAN WAS SURPRISED to discover that the nearer the sun she got the colder she was. She was also mystified by the noises she heard in her ears and the difficulty she had in breathing; but even so, she gave little thought to her own danger. She could think only of David. David whom she would never see again.

The balloon was drifting now at an even altitude. It would rise no higher. Eventually it would commence to drop lower; but before it came to earth, Dian the Beautiful might be dead of hunger and exhaustion. Being practically naked, except for a most sketchy loin cloth she was already chilled through and shivering.

A hunting party far below saw the strange thing floating toward them; and they ran and hid beneath trees, thinking it some new and terrible reptile. Dacor the Strong One, Dian's brother, was in the party. Little did he dream that his sister floated there high above him. He and his companions would tell of the awful creature they had seen; and the story would grow in the telling, but nothing which they could fabricate could equal the truth, if they could have known it.

THE SABERTOOTH PEOPLE are not very bright, but they do know what a volcano is; because there is an intermittently active one in the mountains not far from their own crater; so, putting two and two together, they assumed that their own volcano was about to become active. Had they been just a little bit more intelligent, they would have reasoned that wood smoke does not come from a volcano; but all they knew was that it was smoke and smoke meant fire; and they were afraid.

The best thing to do, then, was to get out of the crater; so they turned to the low point in the crater's rim. It was then that they discovered that their prisoners had escaped.

As they swarmed out of the crater, they were not only frightened but angry. No prisoner had ever escaped before, and they didn't purpose letting these prisoners get away with it. Being good trackers capable of moving with great speed, they had no doubt but

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

that they would soon overhaul the fugitives. The latter however, were also fleet of foot; and they had two advantages: they did not have to watch for spoor to follow, and they were fleeing for their lives. There is no greater spur to honest and concentrated effort than this. Even the old man revealed amazing possibilities as he scampered in the wake of the others.

David and Hodon, being congenitally opposed to flight, hated the position in which they found themselves, but what were they to do? David alone was armed. He carried his crude bow and arrow and a stone knife but these were not enough to repel an attack by a numerically greater force of savage beasts such as the sabertooth men.

While they did not yet know that they were being followed, they assumed that they would be; and the old man had assured them that they would.

"I been there since before my teeth began falling out," he said, "an' you can lay to it that they'll follow us all the way to hell an' gone, for they ain't no prisoner ever escaped from 'em in my time."

Hodon, who was leading, guided them toward the little canyon where he and David had found sanctuary; and they succeeded in reaching its mouth before the first of the pursuers came within sight. It was just after they entered it that a chorus of savage roars told them that the sabertooth men had overtaken them.

David glanced back. Racing toward him were, three or four of the swiftest males and strung out behind them were other bucks and shes and young-the whole tribe was on their heels!

"Get the others into the cave, Hodon!" he called. "I'll hold them up until you're all in."

Hodon hesitated. He wanted to come back and fight at David's side.

"Go on!" shouted the latter. "We'll all be lost if you don't," then Hodon raced on toward the cave with Oaa and the old man.

David wheeled about and sent an arrow into the breast of the leading savage. The fellow screamed and clutched at the shaft; then he spun around like a top and crashed to earth. A second and a third arrow in quick succession found their marks, and two more sabertooth warriors writhed upon the ground. The others paused. David fitted another arrow to his bow and backed away toward the cave.

The sabertooths jabbered and chattered among themselves. Finally a huge buck charged. Hodon and O-aa were in the cave; and the former, reaching down, grasped the hand of the old man and dragged him up. David was still backing toward the cave, holding his fire. His supply of arrows would not last forever; so he must not miss.

The great brute was almost upon him before he loosed his shaft. It drove straight through the heart of the buck, but there were others coming behind him. Not until he had dropped two more in rapid succession did the others pause momentarily; then David turned and raced for the cave. At his heels came the whole tribe of sabertooths, roaring and screaming. They came in mighty leaps and bounds, covering the ground twice as rapidly as David.

Hodon stood in the mouth of the cave. "Jump!" he cried to David. He leaned out and down, extending his hand. As David leaped upward toward the cave mouth, a sabertooth

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

at his heels reached out to seize him; but simultaneously a bit of rock struck the fellow full between the eyes, and he stumbled forward on his face. O-aa, grinning, brushed the dust from her hands.

Hodon pulled David into the cave. "I never thought you'd make it," he said.

There were extra spears and arrows in the cave and a little food. The waterfall dropped so close that they could reach out and catch water in a cupped hand. They would not suffer from thirst. One man with a spear could defend the entrance against such ill-armed brutes as the sabertooths. Altogether, they felt rather secure.

"These brutes won't stay here forever," said David. "When they find they can't get us, they'll go away."

"You don't know 'em," said the old man. "They'll stick around here 'till Hell freezes over, but the joke's goin' to be on them."

"What do you mean?" asked David.

"Why, instead of gettin' four of us, they're only goin' to get one," explained the old man.

"How's that?" inquired David.

"We can't get no food in here," said the old man; "so we gotta eat each other. I reckon I'll be the last man. I'm too dodburned old and tough to eat. Even the sabertooths wouldn't eat me. This here'll make a tender morsel. I reckon we'll start on her."

"Shut up!" snapped David. "We're not cannibals."

"Well, neither was I back at Cape Cod.

I would have reared up on my hind legs an' hit anybody then that had said I'd ever eat man, woman, or child; but then I hadn't never nearly starved to death, nor I didn't know what good eatin' some people can be after you get used to it. Before you come along I was tellin' these other two, about that sweet Swede I et once."

"You also said," interposed O-aa, "that after you'd eaten all your friends you were about to cut your leg off and start eating yourself."

"Yes," admitted the old man, "that's plumb right."

"Then," said O-aa, "when you get hungry, you'd better start eating yourself; because you're not going to eat any of us."

"That's what I calls plumb selfish," said the old man. "If we don't eat each other, the sabertooths are goin' to eat us; an' I'd think you'd rather be eaten by a friend than by one of them critters."

"Look here-er-what is your name, anyway?" David spoke with marked asperity.

The old man puckered his brow in thought. "Dodburn it," he exclaimed at last. "What the dickens is my name? I'll be dod-burned if I ain't plumb forgot. You see I ain't heard it since I was a young man."

"I think," said O-aa to David, "that his name is Dolly Dorcas."

"Well, never mind," said David; "but get this straight: there's to be no more talk of eating one another. Do you understand?"

"Wait until you get good an' hungry," said the old man; "then it won't be a matter of talking about it."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

David rationed out what food there had been stored in the cave—mostly nuts and tubers; as these would not spoil quickly. Each had his share. They took turns watching, while the others slept, if they cared to; and as there was nothing else to do, they slept a great part of the time. It is a custom of Pellucidarians. They seem to store up energy thus, so that they need less sleep, afterward. Thus they prepare themselves for long journeys or arduous undertakings.

Some of the sabertooths remained in the canyon at all times. They made several attempts to storm the cave; but after being driven off easily, they gave up. They would starve their quarry out.

The food supply in the cave dwindled rapidly. David presently suspected that it dwindled fastest while the old man was on watch and the others slept; so once he feigned sleep and caught the old man taking a little food from the supply of each of the others and hiding it in a crevice in the back of the cave.

He awoke the others and told them, and O-aa wanted to kill the old man at once. "He deserves to die," said David, "but I have a better plan than that of killing him ourselves. We'll drop him down to the sabertooths."

The old man whimpered and begged, and promised never to do it again; so they let him live, but they did not let him stand watch alone again.

At last their food was all gone, and the sabertooths were still in the canyon. The besieged were ravenous. They drank quantities of water to allay the craving for food. They were getting weaker and weaker, and David realized that the end was near. They slept a great deal, but fitfully.

Once, when O-aa was standing watch, David awoke with a start; and was horrified to see the old man sneaking up behind her with a spear. His intentions were all too obvious. David called a warning and leaped for him but just in time.

Hodon awoke. The old man was grovelling on the floor of the cave. O-aa and David were looking down at him.

"What has happened?" demanded Hodon.

They told him. Hodon came toward the old man. "This time he dies," he said.

"No! No!" shrieked the terrified creature. "I was not going to keep it all for myself. I was going to share it with you."

"You beast!" exclaimed Hodon, picking up the spear the old man had dropped.

Screaming the latter leaped to his feet; and, running to the mouth of the cave, sprang out.

A hundred sabertooths were in the canyon. Straight toward them the old man ran, screaming at the top of his voice, his eyes wild with terror, his toothless mouth contorted.

The sabertooths fell aside, shrinking from him; and through the lane they made the old man fled and disappeared in the forest beyond the end of the canyon.

XIII

GHAK THE HAIRY ONE, with a thousand warriors, marched up to Kali. He did not know that Fash, the king of Suvi, had conquered it; so he was surprised when his advance guard was attacked as they neared the cliff. However, it made no difference to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Ghak the Hairy One whether he fought Suvian or Kalian.

Fash had thought that the advance guard constituted the whole force with which he had to deal, as it was his own custom to hold all his warriors in one body when he attacked. He did not know that David Innes had taught the Sarians a different method of warfare, which was unfortunate for Fash.

When Ghak's main body came up, Fash's men scattered in all directions. A number retreated to the eaves of Kali. The Sarians swarmed up after them before they could remove the ladders. Men fought hand to hand on the narrow ledges all the way up to the highest ledge. Here, cornered Suvians leaped to their death; and at last Ghak the Hairy One stood victorious above the eaves of Kali.

Then the Sarian prisoners came from their prison eaves and for the first time Ghak learned that David's little force had been either killed or made prisoner and that David was missing. All agreed that he must be dead.

Ghak's force rested and fed at the Kali cliff; and then victorious but sad, started back to their ships waiting on the Lural Az. They had scarcely left the cliff when a strange figure of a man came dashing out of the forest a toothless little old man with an enormous white beard. His beard was stained with juice of berries and the pulp of fruit. He jibbered and yammered like the little hairy men who live in the trees of the forest.

The warriors of Sari had never seen a creature like this before; so they captured him, as they might have captured any strange animal and took him to show to Ghak.

"Who are you?" demanded Ghak.

"Are you going to kill me?" The old man was whimpering, the tears rolling down his cheeks.

"No," Ghak assured him. "Tell me who you are and what you are doing here.",

"My name is not Dolly Dorcas," said the old man, "and I was going to divide O-aa with the others, but Hodon wanted to kill me."

"Hodon!" exclaimed Ghak. "What do you know of Hodon?"

"I know that he was going to kill me, but I ran away."

"Where is Hodon?" demanded Ghak.

"He and David and O-aa are in the cave. The sabertooth men are waiting to eat them."

"What cave? Where is it?" asked Ghak.

"If I told you, you'd take me back there and Hodon would kill me," said the old man.

"If you lead us to where David and Hodon are, no one will kill you. I promise you that," Ghak assured him.

"And you'll see that I get plenty to eat?"

"All you can hold."

"Then follow me, but look out for the sabertooths; they will eat you all unless you kill them."

O-AA LOOKED VERY wan and weak. Hodon looked at her and tears almost came to his eyes; then he spoke to David.

"David," he said, "perhaps I have done wrong. I have hoarded my ration of food,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eating only half of it.”

“It was yours to do with as you wished,” said David. “We shall not take it from you.”

“I do not want it,” said Hodon. “I saved it for O-aa, and now she needs it.”

O-aa looked up and smiled. “I hoarded mine too, Hodon,” she said. “I saved it for you. Here it is.” She took a little package of food wrapped in the large leaves that grew over the mouth of the cave and handed it to Hodon.

David walked to the mouth of the cave and looked out down the little canyon; but everything was blurred, as though he were looking through a mist.

Hodon knelt beside O-aa. “A woman would do that only for the man she loved,” he said.

O-aa nodded and crept into his arms. “But I have not killed Blug,” said Hodon.

O-aa drew his lips down to hers.

“What will your brother and sister say?” asked Hodon.

“I have no brother or sister,” said O-aa.

Hodon held her so tight that she gasped for breath.

Presently the mist cleared, and David could see quite plainly. He saw sabertooths who had been outside the canyon running in. They were jabbering excitedly. Then he saw human warriors approaching, warriors who carried muskets. There were many of them. When the sabertooths charged them, they were mowed down by a ragged volley. The noise was terrific, and clouds of black smoke filled the mouth of the canyon.

At the noise of the muskets, O-aa and Hodon ran to the mouth of the cave.

“Ghak has come,” said David. “Now everything is all right.”

It was well that he was to have a brief interlude of happiness before he returned to Sari.

WHEN THE LAST of the sabertooth men had been killed or had fled, David, Hodon, and O-aa joined Ghak and his warriors. Immediately, Hodon espied the little old man and advanced upon him.

“I kill,” said Hodon.

The little old man screamed and hid behind Ghak. “You promised that you would not let Hodon kill me,” he whimpered, “if I guided you here.”

“I shall keep my promise,” said Ghak. “Leave the man alone, Hodon! What has he done that you should want to kill him?”

“He tried to kill O-aa; so that he could eat her,” replied Hodon.

“I was not going to keep her all for myself,” whined the old man; “I was going to share her with Hodon and David.”

“Who is this old man,” demanded Ghak, “who says that his name is not Dolly Dorcas?”

“He was a prisoner of the sabertooth men,” said David. “I think he is a little crazy.”

“He led me here,” said Ghak; “so you have him to thank for your rescue. Do not harm him. What does he mean by saying his name is not Dolly Dorcas?”

“He told us,” explained David, “that he was wrecked on a ship named the Dolly Dorcas near the North Pole of the outer world from which I come; then, in a small boat, he drifted

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

through the North Polar Opening into Pellucidar. O-aa got things a little mixed and thought his name was Dolly Dorcas.”

“He ate all the men that were in the boat with him,” said O-aa; “and he said that when they were all gone, he was about to cut off one of his own legs and eat that, when he found food. He is a very hungry man.”

“I do not see how he could eat anybody,” said Ghak; “he has no teeth.”

“You’d be surprised,” said the little old man.

“Well, you—What is your name anyway, if it isn’t Dolly Dorcas?” demanded Ghak.

“I don’t remember,” said the old man.

“Well, then, we shall just call you Ahgilak; and that will be your name.” (Ahgilak means in Pellucidarian, old man.)

“Well,” said the little old man, “at least Ah-gilak is a better name for a man than Dolly Dorcas.”

“And remember this, Ah-gilak,” continued Ghak, “if you ever try to eat anybody again, I’ll let Hodon kill you.

“Some of them were very good eating,” sighed Ahgilak, reminiscently, “especially that Swede.”

“Let us go the village of Kali now,” said David. “Oaa, Hodon, and I must have food. We nearly starved to death in that cave. Then I shall send a runner north to the eaves where Oose and the remnants of his people are hiding, after which we will go down to the Lural Az, where your ships lie, Ghak, and embark for home; if you feel that you have taught the Suvians their lessons sufficiently well.”

Between the canyon and the village of Kali, they saw a party of men coming from the north. At sight of so many armed warriors, these people turned to flee; but Oaa called to them, “Come back! It is all right; these are our friends;” then she said to Ghak, “those are my people; I recognized my father, the king of Kali.”

When the newcomers approached more closely, Hodon saw the Bug was with Oose; and he went and put his arm around O-aa. When Bug saw that, he ran forward.

“I told you that if you were around here when I came back, I’d kill you,” he shouted.

“Go away!” said O-aa. “Hodon is my mate.”

“What is that?” demanded Oose, her father. “I told you you were to mate with Bug, and I meant it; Bug shall have you.”

“I kill!” shouted Bug, as he bore down on Hodon.

The Sarian met him with a clean right to the chin, and Bug dropped in his tracks.

The Sarian warriors yelled in delight; but Bug was up in an instant, and this time he managed to clinch. The two men fell to the ground, fighting like a couple of wild cats. It was not a pretty fight, as the Marquis of Queensberry was entirely unknown to these men of the Stone Age. They gouged and bit and scratched, as Bug tried to fasten his teeth in Hodon’s jugular.

They were both covered with blood, and one of Bug’s eyes was hanging out on his cheek, when Hodon espied a rock lying near at hand. He happened to be on top for the moment; and, seizing the rock, he raised it high and brought it down with all his strength

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

full on Blug's face.

Blug had never been beautiful; but without any features to speak of left, and those scrambled, he was something of a sight. Hodon raised the rock and struck again; the third time, Blug relaxed and lay still; but Hodon did not stop striking him until his whole head was a jelly; then he stood up.

He looked at Oose. "O-aa is my mate," he said.

Oose looked down at Blug. "Blug is not much good any more," he said. "If O-aa wants you she may have you."

They looked around, then, for O-aa. She had disappeared. "It has always been thus," said Hodon. "Three times I have fought for her, and three times she has run away while I was fighting."

"When you catch her, you should beat her," said Oose.

"I will," said Hodon.

He searched for O-aa for a long time, but he did not find her; then he came to the village of Kali, where his fellow Sarians were eating and resting.

When David Innes had rested sufficiently, the Sarians bid the Kalians farewell and departed for their ships, which lay off the coast forty miles away.

Hodon went with them. He was very sad, for he thought that O-aa had run away from him because she did not really wish to be his mate.

And O-aa? When she had seen Blug get his arms around Hodon, and the two men had fallen to the ground, she had known that Hodon would be killed; so she had run away, rather than remain and mate with Blug. She started south, intending to find Sari, which lay eight hundred miles away. She knew that she had a long journey before her and that the chances were quite remote that she would survive all the innumerable dangers of the way; but, with Hodon dead, she did not care much.

She was a cave girl, and death was such a familiar occurrence in her life that she did not fear it particularly. Early man must have been a fatalist; otherwise he would have gone crazy from fear. O-aa was a fatalist. She said to herself, "If the tarag, or the thipdar, or Ta-ho happened to meet me at just the right time and place, I shall be killed. Whatever they and I are doing now must lead up to that moment when we meet or do not meet; nothing can change it." That is the way she felt; so she did not worry-but she kept her eyes and her ears open, just the same.

O-aa had never been to Sari, but she knew that it lay inland from the Lural Az and that between Kali and Sari there were a few tribes which belonged to the Federation and would be friendly to her. She would follow along the shore of the Lural Az until she found one of these tribes, and then she could get better directions for the remainder of her journey.

She knew that David Innes and the other Sarians would soon be going down to the sea and their ships, but she wanted to avoid them for fear that they would send her back to her father and Blug; so she went quite a distance south before she turned toward the east and the Lural Az, that great body of uncharted water, teeming with giant saurians, such as ruled the Cretaceous seas in the Mesozoic period of the outer crust. O-aa was a hill girl and was afraid of the great sea, but no less terrible were the dangers that threat-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ened her on land.

And as O-aa came down to the sea of which she was so afraid, eyes watched her from the concealment of bushes that she was approaching.

ABNER PERRY WAS a broken man; he could neither eat nor sleep, for he knew that it was his own culpable carelessness that had tossed Dian the Beautiful to the mercy of the winds on high. He had dispatched three runners to try to follow the course of the drifting balloon; but he held too little hope that, should they find it when it came to earth, they would find Dian alive: cold, hunger, and thirst would long since have taken their grim toll of her strength. For the first time in his life, Abner Perry seriously considered taking his own life.

Dian the Beautiful had been mildly surprised by the sudden upward rush of the balloon, but she had not guessed what it portended until she looked down over the edge of the basket and saw the end of the rope which had secured the balloon to the windlass dangling high above the village of Sari.

Dian the Beautiful is a cave girl of the Stone Age. She knew nothing about balloons other than what she had gathered from Abner Perry while he was building this one. Only in a vague way did she know what made it go up in the air. She knew nothing about ripcords, and so she did not realize that once again Perry had blundered; he had neglected to equip the balloon with this safety device.

Had she known more about ballooning, she would have known that she might have climbed the suspension lines to the net and cut a hole in the gas bag with her dagger, letting the gas escape. But Dian the Beautiful did not know this; and so she watched her friends shrink to tiny dots far below; and eventually, with the village of Sari, disappear in the distance.

Dian knew that the sun was a ball of fire; and so she was surprised to discover that the closer she got to the sun, the colder she became. It didn't make sense, and it upset a theory that was as old as the human race in Pellucidar. But then the balloon upset some long-standing theories, too. She knew that the basket and the peritonia of dinosaurs, of which the gas bag was fabricated, were far too heavy to sail up into the air. Why they should do so was beyond her; so she decided that it was because Perry could do anything.

The prevailing winds of Pellucidar blow, generally, from the north to south for half the outer-Earthly year and from south to north the other half, depending upon whether it is winter at one Pole or the other. The wind that carried Dian away from Sari was blowing in a southwesterly direction and bearing her toward Thuria, The Land of Awful Shadow.

Beneath the eternal noonday sun, the surface temperature of Pellucidar is usually high, requiring of her inhabitants a minimum of clothing; so Dian's costume was scanty to a degree. A bit of skin, caught with a rawhide thong across one shoulder, hung gracefully and becomingly in a long point to below her knees in one place, leaving one well-shaped leg entirely bare almost to her waist. It had been designed with as much subtlety as the finest creation of a French couturier, to accentuate and reveal, to hide and intrigue; but it had not been designed for great altitudes. Dian was cold.

Dian was hungry and thirsty, too; but there were neither food nor drink in this new

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

world into which she had soared; so she did what Pellucidarians usually do when they are hungry and cannot obtain food-she lay down and slept. This conserves energy and prolongs life; it also gives one some respite from the gnawing of hunger and the pangs of thirst.

Dian did not know how long she slept, but when she awoke she was over The Land of Awful Shadow. She was in shadow herself, and now it was very cold. Above her was the Dead World, as the Pellucidarians call it, that tiny satellite of Pellucidar's sun that, revolving coincidentally with the rotation of the Earth, remained constantly in a fixed position above that part of the inner world known as The Land of Awful Shadow. Below her was Thuria, which lies partially within the shadow, and, to her right, the Lidi Plains where the Thurians graze and train their gigantic saddle animals, the huge diplodocuses of the Upper Jurassic, which they call lidi.

The greater cold had awakened Dian, and now she was suffering from that and from hunger and from thirst. Hope had left her, for she knew that she must soon die; and she thought that her dead body would continue to float around above Pellucidar forever.

When the balloon emerged again into sunlight, Dian lay down and slept; and, from exhaustion, she must have slept a long time, for when she awoke she was above the nameless strait that extends for a thousand miles or more and connects the Sojar Az with the Korsar Az. She knew what it was, for it bounds the southwestern portion of the continent on which Sari lies-beyond it was the terra incognita of her people, and no man knew what lay in that land of mystery.

The strait is about two hundred miles wide at the point at which Dian was crossing it; and the land curving gently upward around her, gave her such a range of vision that she could see the opposite shore.

Even in her hopelessness she could not but be impressed by the fact that she was looking upon a new world, the first of all her people to set eyes upon it. It gave her a little thrill, in which, possibly, was something of terror.

Her absorption was broken in upon by a hissing sound that came from above and behind her. Turning and looking up, she saw that terror of the Pellucidarian skies-a giant thipdar circling above the gas bag. The body of this huge pterodactyl measures some forty feet in length, while its bat-like wings have a spread of fully thirty feet. Its mighty jaws are armed with long, sharp teeth and its claws are equipped with horrible talons.

As a rule it attacks anything in sight. If it attacked the gas bag and ripped it open, Dian would be plummeted into the water below. She was helpless; she could only watch the terrible creature circling about the balloon and listen to its angry hisses.

The gas bag had the thipdar baffled. It paid no attention to him, but floated on serenely; it neither tried to escape nor give battle. What was the thing, anyway? He wondered if it were good to eat; and to find out, he gave it a tentative nip. Instantly some foul smelling stuff blew into his nostrils. He hissed angrily, and flew off a short distance; then he wheeled and came screaming toward the gas bag again.

Dian tried to think only of David, as one might concentrate on prayer who knew the end was near.

O-AA, ALWAYS ALERT to danger, nevertheless was not aware of the man hiding in

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the bushes. He was a large man with broad shoulders, a deep chest, and mighty fore-arms and biceps. He wore a loin cloth, made of the feathers of birds-yellow feathers with two transverse bars of red feathers. It was artistic and striking. He had rings in his ears; they were made of fish bone. A few strands of his hair were braided and made into a small knot at the top of the back of his head; into this knot were stuck three long, yellow feathers barred with red. He carried a stone knife and a spear tipped with the tooth of a huge shark. His features were strong and regular; he was a handsome man, and he was suntanned to a golden bronze.

As O-aa came opposite him, he leaped from his concealment and seized her by the hair; then he started to drag her through the bushes down toward the beach. He soon found that that was not so easy as he had hoped. Dragging O-aa was like dragging a cat with hydrophobia; O-aa didn't drag worth a cent. She pulled back; she bit; she scratched; she kicked; and when she wasn't biting, she was emitting a stream of vitriolic vituperation that would have done credit to Pegler when on the subject of Mr. Brown.

Cave people of the Stone Age are of few words and short tempers; the prehistoric Adonis who was dragging O-aa along by the hair was no exception that proved the rule; he was wholly orthodox. After a couple of bites, he raised his spear and clunked O-aa on the head with the haft of it; and O-aa took the full count. Then he swung her across one shoulder and trotted down to the beach, where a canoe was drawn up on the sand. He dumped O-aa into it and then pulled it out into the water.

He held it against the incoming rollers; and at precisely the psychological moment, he leaped in and paddled strongly. The light craft rose on the next roller, dove into the trough beyond, and O-aa was launched upon the great sea she so greatly feared.

When she recovered consciousness her heart sank. The canoe was leaping about boisterously, and land was already far away. The man sat upon the deck of the tapering stern and paddled with a very broad, flat paddle. O-aa appraised him furtively. She noted and appreciated his pulchritude at the same time that she was seeking to formulate a plan for killing him.

She also examined the canoe. It was about twenty feet long, with a three foot beam; it was decked over fore and aft for about six feet, leaving an eight foot cockpit; transverse booms were lashed across it at each end of the cockpit, protruding outboard about four feet on either side; lashed to the underside of the ends of these booms was a twenty foot length of bamboo, about six inches in diameter, running parallel with the craft on each side, the whole constituting a double out-rigger canoe. It was a clumsy craft to handle, but it was uncapsizable; even O-aa, who knew nothing about boats or seas, could see that; and she felt reassured. She would have been even more reassured had she known that the compartments beneath the two decks were watertight and that in addition to this, they held fresh water in bamboo containers and a quantity of food.

The man saw that she had regained consciousness. "What is your name?" he asked.

"My name is O-aa," she snapped; "I am the daughter of a king. When my mate, my father, and my seven brothers learn of this, they will come and kill you."

The man laughed. "My name is La-ak," he said. "I live on the Island of Canda. I have six wives; you will be the seventh. With seven wives I shall be a very important man; our

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

chief has only seven. I came to the mainland to get another wife; I did not have to look long, did I?" Again he laughed.

"I will not mate with you," O-aa snapped.

Once again La-ak laughed. "You will be glad to," he said, "after my other six wives teach you how to behave that is, you will if you live through it; they will not stand for any foolishness. They have already killed two women whom I brought home, who refused to become my wives. In my country no man may take a mate without her consent. I think it is a very foolish custom; but it is an old one, and we have to abide by it."

"You had better take me back to the mainland," said O-aa, "for I will not mate with you; and I shall certain kill some of your wives before they kill me; then you will be worse off than you are now."

He looked at her for a long time before he spoke again, "I believe you," he said; "but you are very beautiful, and I do not intend to be cheated of you entirely. What happens in this canoe, no one in Canda will ever know, for I'll throw you overboard before we get there," then he laid down his paddle and came toward her.

DAVID INNES, HODON, and the little old man, Ah-gilak, boarded the ship of Ghak the Hairy One; and when all of the other warriors had boarded this and the other ships, the fleet set sail.

Ah-gilak looked around him with a critical and contemptuous eye. "Dod-burn it" he ejaculated. "What dod-burned landlubber built this tub? There ain't a gol-durned thing right about her. I reckon as how she'd sail sidewise just as well as she would ahead! an' a lateen sail!" he added, disgustedly. "Now, you should have saw the Dolly Dorcas; there was a sweet ship."

Ghak the Hairy One glared at him with a dangerous gleam in his eye, for Ghak was proud of every ship in the Navy of the Empire of Pellucidar. They were the first ships he had ever seen and they carried the first sails; to him they were the last word in perfection and modernity. Abner Perry had designed them; did this little, toothless runt think he could do better than Abner Perry? With a great, hairy hand Ghak seized Ah-gilak by the beard.

"Wait!" cautioned David. "I think Ahgilak knows what he is talking about. He sailed ships on the outer Earth. Perry never did. Perry did the best he could down here, with no knowledge of ship design and no one to help him who had ever seen a ship before. He would be the first to welcome some one who could help us build a better navy. I think we can use Ahgilak after we get home."

Ghak reluctantly released Ah-gilak's beard. "He talks too much," he said, and, turning, walked away.

"If I hadn't been wrecked in the Arctic and washed down into this dod-burned world," said Ah-gilak, "I would probably have commanded the fastest clipper ship in the world today. I was aimin' for to build it just as soon as I got back to Cape Cod."

"Clipper ship!" said David. "There aren't any more clipper ships. I don't suppose there's been one built in more than fifty years."

"Why, dod-burn you," exclaimed Ahgilak; "they hadn't been building 'em more'n five year when the Dolly Dorcas went down-let's see; that was 1845."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

David Innes looked at him in amazement. "Are you sure of that date?" he demanded.

"Sure as I am that I'm standin' here, as the feller said," replied Ah-gilak.

"How old were you when the Dolly Dorcas was lost?" asked David.

"I was forty years old. I can always remember, because my birthday was the same as President Tyler's. He would have been fifty-five on March 29th, 1845, if he lived; an' I was just fifteen years younger than him. They was talkin' about a feller named Polk runnin' for President when we sailed."

"Do you know how old you are now?"

asked David.

"Well, I sort o' lost track o' time down here in this dod-burned world; but I reckon I must be close to sixty."

"Not very close," said David; "you're a hundred and fifty-three."

"Well, of all the dod-burned liars, you sure take the cake! A hundred an' fifty-three! God an' Gabriel! Do I look a hundred an' fifty-three?"

"No," said David; "I'd say that you don't look a day over a hundred and fifty."

The old man looked at David disgustedly. "I ain't mentionin' no names," he said; "but some folks ain't got no more sense than a white pine dog with a poplar tail, as the feller said;" then he turned and walked away.

Hodon had been listening to the conversation; but he knew nothing about years or ages, and he wondered what it all meant. Anyway, he would not have been much interested, had he; for he was thinking of O-aa, and wondering where she was. He was sorry now that he had not stayed on shore and searched for her.

The flag ship of the little fleet of three ships was called Amoz in honor of Dian the Beautiful, who came from the land of Amoz. It was crowded with five hundred warriors. It had eight guns, four on a side, on a lower deck. There were solid shot, chain shot, and shells for each of the guns, all of which were muzzle loading. They had to be run back on crude wooden tracks to load, and then run forward again, with their muzzles sticking out of port holes to fire; they were the pride of the Navy.

The sailors who manned the Amoz and the other ships were copper colored Mezops from the Anoroc Islands; and the Admiral of the Fleet was Ja, King of Anoroc. The lateen sail of the Amoz was enormous; it required the combined strength of fifty husky Mezops to raise it. Like the gas bag of Perry's balloon and the fabric of his late aeroplane, it was made of the peritonea of dinosaurs. This was one of Perry's prime discoveries, for there were lots of dinosaurs and their peritonea were large and tough. Habitually, they objected to giving them up; so it was quite an exciting job collecting peritonea, for dinosaurs such as carry A-1 peritonea are large, ferocious, and ill-mannered.

The fleet had been under way for but a short time, when Ah-gilak, casting a weather eye about from long habit, discovered a cloud astern. "We're a-goin' to have a blow," he said to Ja, and pointed.

Ja looked and nodded. "Yes," he said, and gave orders to shorten sail.

The cloud was not very large when it was first discovered, but it was undeniably a wind cloud. As it came closer, it grew in extent; and it became black. Ragged shreds of it

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

whipped ahead. Around the ship was a sudden, deadly calm.

"We're a-goin' to have more 'n a gale. That there looks like a dod-burned hurricane."

Now there was a sudden gust of wind that made the sagging sail flap angrily. Ja had ordered it close reefed; and the Mezops were battling with the whipping peritonea, as the wind increased in violence.

And now the storm was upon them. Rolling black clouds shut out the eternal sun, lightning flashed, and thunder roared; rain began to fall-not in drops or sheets, but in solid masses. The wind wailed and shrieked like some ferocious demon of destruction. Men clung to the ship's rails, to one another, to anything that they could lay hands on to keep from being blown overboard.

David Innes went among them, ordering them below; at last only the Mezop sailors and a few Sarians remained on the upper deck-they and the little old man, Ahgilak. Innes and Ghak and Hodon clustered behind Ja and Ah-gilak. The little old man was in his element.

"I bin wrecked seven times," he shrieked above the storm, "an' I can be wrecked again, as the feller said; an' dodburn it if I don't think I'm goin' to be."

The sea had risen, and the waves were growing constantly in immensity. The clumsy, overloaded ship wallowed out of one great sea only to be half swallowed by another.

So dark was it and so thick the rain that neither of the other ships could be seen. David was fearful for the safety of the little Sari; in fact, he was fearful for the fate of all three of the ships if the storm did not abate soon or if it increased in violence. As though possessed of sardonic humor, the hurricane raged even more violently while the thought was yet in David's mind.

The Amoz rose upon the crest of a watery mountain to plunge into a watery abyss. The men clung to whatever they could as the ship buried its nose deep in the sea; and a huge, following wave combed over the stern, submerging them.

David thought it was the end. He knew that the ship would never rise again from beneath those tons of raging water, yet still he clung to the thing he had seized. Slowly, ponderously, like some gigantic beast trying to drag itself from quicksand, the Amoz, staggered up, shaking the water from its deck.

"Dod-burn me!" screamed Ah-gilak; "but this is a sweet ship. It didn't take half that sea to swamp the Dolly Dorcas, and I thought she was a sweet ship. Well live and learn, as the feller said."

There were not as many men on the deck as there had been. David wondered how many of the poor devils had been lost. He looked at those about him; Ghak, and Ja, and Hondon, and Ah-gilak were all there.

David looked up at the waves as they towered above the ship, and he looked down into the abysses as the ship started down from the crest. "Seventy feet," he said, half to himself; "a good seventy feet."

Suddenly Ah-gilak yelled, "Make fast there an' say your prayers!"

David glanced astern. The most stupendous wave he had ever seen trembled above

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

them-hundreds of tons of water poised to crush the ship; then it came!

DIAN THE BEAUTIFUL awaited the end with supreme indifference; she had reached the limit of human endurance; but she was not afraid. In fact, she was just a little fascinated by the situation, and wondered whether the screaming thipdar winging toward her was coming for her or the gas bag-not that it would make much difference to her in the end.

Suddenly the giant pterodactyl veered to one side, and rushed past. Dian watched it as it soared away, waiting for it to turn and renew the attack; but it did not return, it had finally discovered something of which it was afraid.

Dian looked down over the edge of the basket. She could see the land beyond the strait quite plainly now; she seemed to be much lower, and wondered. She did not know that the gas was leaking from the balloon where the thipdar had nipped it.

It was some time before she realized the truth-that the balloon was actually descending; and now she had something more to worry about: would it reach the shore, or would it come down in the water? If the latter, she would make food for some saurian; or for a horde of them that would tear her to pieces.

And on the land a short distance back from the shore she saw an amazing sight for Pellucidar-a city, a walled city. She would not have known what it was had David not told her of the cities of his world. Well, she might be about as well off among the saurians as among strange human beings. There was little choice, but upon reflection she hoped that the balloon reached the land before it came down.

It was quite low now, and the land was still a good half mile away. She tried to gauge the relation between its drop and its horizontal progress toward the land. She looked down over the edge of the basket and saw that the rope was already dragging in the water. The rope was five hundred feet long. After a part of the rope was submerged the balloon didn't seem to drop any more; but its progress toward land was also retarded, as it dragged the submerged rope through the water. However, it appeared now that it would reach the land first. Dian was congratulating herself on this as she peered down into the strait when she saw the head of a creature which she knew as an aztarag, or tiger of the sea, break the water near the trailing rope.

She was congratulating herself upon the fact that she was not down there, when the creature seized the rope in its mighty jaws and started for the center of the strait.

This was too much! Tired, hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, though no longer cold, Dian almost broke down. With an effort she kept back the tears for now there was no hope.

But was there one! If she could cut the rope, the balloon would be freed; and would continue on toward shore. Relieved of the weight of five hundred feet of heavy rope, it would certainly drift far inland before it came down, But she couldn't reach the rope; it was fastened to the underneath side of the basket.

There must be some way! She drew her stone knife and commenced to hack at the wickerwork of the basket's floor. At last she had a hole large enough to get her arm through. Feeling around, she found the large rope. It was attached to the basket by many smaller ropes which ran to the periphery of the basket's bottom.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Dian commenced to saw on these smaller ropes. She could see through the hole in the bottom of the basket, and she saw that the balloon was being rapidly dragged toward the water-the aztarag had sounded and was pulling the balloon down behind it!

The girl worked frantically, for once the basket was submerged she would be lost-the sea beneath her was alive with hungry creatures. She saw a gigantic shark just below her; it thrust its snout out of water; and she could almost touch it, as the last rope parted.

Instantly the balloon leaped into the air, and once more started its precarious and seemingly endless journey toward the mysterious world beyond the nameless strait.

AS O-AA SAW La-ak coming toward her she stood up. "Go back to your paddle," she said, "or I will jump overboard."

La-ak hesitated; for he guessed, rightly, that the girl meant what she said; furthermore, he knew that eventually she must sleep; then he could overpower her. "You are a fool," he said, as he resumed his paddle; "one lives but once."

"O-aa lives in her own way," retorted the girl.

She sat facing the stern; so that she might watch La-ak. She saw his spear lying beside him; she saw the dagger at his hip. These were instruments of escape, but she could not get them. She glanced around over the great sea that she so feared. Very, very dimly, through the haze of distance, she thought that she could see the mainland; elsewhere there was no sign of land-just the vast expanse of blue water rolling gradually upward in the distance to merge with the blue sky that arched over them and down again to merge with the blue water again on the opposite side. To her left she saw a little cloud, far away. It meant nothing to O-aa, who was a hill girl and consequently less cloud conscious than those who live much upon the sea.

Astern, she saw something else-a long, slender neck toppled by a hideous head with great-fanged jaws. Occasionally she caught a glimpse of a sleek, seal-like body rising momentarily above the slow ground swells. She knew this thing as a ta-ho-az, or a sea lion. It was not the harmless, playful creature that sports in the waters of our own Pacific Ocean; but a terrible engine of destruction whose ravenous appetite was never satisfied.

The fearsome creature was gliding smoothly through the water toward the canoe. That long neck would arch over the gunwale and snatch either La-ak or herself, probably both; or the creature would place a giant flipper on the craft and capsize or swamp it. O-aa thought quickly. She wished to be saved from La-ak, but not at the risk of her own life, if that comfortable circumstance could be avoided.

She stood up and pointed, taking a couple of steps toward La-ak as she did so. "Look!" she cried.

La-ak turned to look behind him, and as he did so O-aa sprang forward and seized his spear; then she thrust it with all her strength into the body of La-ak beneath his left shoulder.

With a scream of agony and rage, La-ak tried to turn upon her; but O-aa held to the end of the spear's haft; and when La-ak turned, the sharp shark's tooth with which the spear was tipped, tore into his heart. Thus died La-ak of the Island of Canda.

O-aa looked back at the ta-ho-az. It was approaching, but leisurely; as though it was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

quite sure that its quarry could not escape, and consequently saw no occasion for haste.

O-aa looked at the pretty yellow and red feather loin cloth on the body of La-ak and at the feathers in his hair. These she had admired greatly; so she removed them, after jerking the spear from the dead man; and then she rolled the naked body of Laak over the stern of the canoe, after which she picked up the paddle; and with strong, if clumsy, strokes sent the craft ahead.

She glanced back often to see what the ta-ho-az was doing; and at last, to her relief, she saw that it was doing what she had hoped it would do-it had stopped to devour the body of La-ak. This, she guessed, would occupy it for some time; since, though its jaws were enormous, its neck was slender; and it must necessarily nibble rather than gulp.

O-aa had never handled a paddle before, which is not strange, since never before had she been in a boat of any description; but she had watched La-ak; and now she did remarkably well, considering her ignorance and clumsiness of the craft.

She was hungry, thirsty, and sleepy, and, as now she had lost sight of all land and had no idea in which direction to paddle, she decided that it would be foolish to paddle at all; since, there being so many different directions, and the nearest land being in one direction only, the chances were all in favor of her paddling in a wrong direction. It would be much pleasanter just to drift with the wind.

Of course she was endowed with that homing instinct that is the common heritage of all Pellucidarians to compensate them for lack of heavenly bodies to guide them, but out here on this vast expanse of water in an environment so totally unfamiliar, for the first time in her life she did not trust it.

The little cloud that she had seen had grown to a big cloud, and was coming nearer. O-aa looked at it and thought that it was going to rain, for which she would be thankful; since it would give her water to drink; then she turned her attention to other things.

She had noticed that there was one plank in the after deck where La-ak had sat that didn't seem to fit as well as the others; and though it was a trivial thing, she had wondered at it. It had suggested something to her-that no one would come out upon this great ocean without food or water. Now she investigated; for O-aa, as you may have gathered, was no fool; and she found that the board, skillfully grooved on both edges, pulled out, revealing a large compartment beneath. In this compartment were extra weapons, fishhooks, lines, nets, bamboo water containers, and smoked meats and dried fruits and vegetables.

O-aa ate and drank her fill; then, she lay down to sleep, while the great, black cloud billowed toward her, and the lightning flashed and the thunder boomed. O-aa slept the dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion plus a full and contented stomach.

DAVID WAS SURE THAT the Amoz was doomed, as he saw the giant wave curling above her stern; then it broke over them, crushing them to the deck, tearing at them to break their holds on the supports to which they clung, driving the prow of the ship deep into the sea.

Not a man there but knew she could never recover from this blow; but, she did. Rolling and wallowing she slowly emerged; and as the water sluiced from her deck, David saw the little old man going with it toward the bow, and he lunged after him.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The mast had gone, leaving only a stump, around which was tangled cordage and a section of the sail, that had fouled and ripped away, just as he reached this, David caught the little old man by one ankle; then, as he himself was being washed toward the stern, he managed to seize hold of the cordage and retain his hold until the last of the water had gone over the side.

He thought that a man one hundred and fifty-three years old could never recover from such a shock; and he was about to pick him up and carry him back, when Ahgilak scrambled to his feet.

"Dad-burn it!" ejaculated the old man, "I durn near got my feet wet that time, as the feller said."

"Are you all right?" David asked.

"Never felt so fit in my life," replied Ahgilak. "Say, you come after me, didn't you? Why, you dod-burned fool, you might have been washed overboard." That was all he ever said about it.

That last wave marked the height of the storm. The wind continued to blow a gale, but the hurricane was past. The sea still ran high, but was diminishing. After what the Amoz had withstood, she seemed safe enough now. With no headway, she wallowed in the trough of the sea; often standing on her beam ends, but always righting herself.

"It'd take a dod-burned act of Congress to upset this tub," said Ah-gilak. "You can't sail her, an' you can't steer her; but, by gum, you can't wreck her; an' if I'd a had her instead o' the Dolly Dorcas I wouldn't be down here now in this dod-burned hole-in-the-ground, but back in Cape Cod, probably votin' for John Tyler again, or some other good Democrat."

David went below, at the risk of life and limb, to see how the men there had fared. With the coming of the storm, they had closed all ports, and fastened the guns down more securely. Fortunately, none of them had broken loose; and there were only a few minor casualties among the men, from being thrown about during the wild pitching of the ship.

The Mezop sailors above had not fared so well; all but twenty-five of them had been washed overboard. And the boats were gone, the mast was gone, and most of the sail. The Amoz was pretty much of a derelict. Neither of the other ships was in sight; and David had given them both up for lost, especially the little Sari.

Their situation looked rather hopeless to these men of the Stone Age. "If the boats hadn't been lost," said Ghak, "some of us could get ashore."

"Why can't we break up the deck and build a raft-several of them?" suggested Hodon. "We could paddle rafts to shore, but we couldn't ever paddle the Amoz."

"You dod-burned landlubbers give me a pain," snorted Ah-gilak. "We got the stub of a mast, part of the sail, and plenty cordage; we can jury rig the doddurned tub, an' get to shore twice as fast an' ten times as easy as buildin' rafts an' paddlin'. Give me some hands, an' I'll have her shipshape in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail, as the feller said. How fer is to port?"

David shrugged. "That depends on how far the hurricane carried us and in what direction. We may be fifty miles from port, or we may be five hundred. Your guess would

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

be better than mine.”

“How’s the fresh water?” demanded Ahgilak.

“We’ve enough for many sleeps,” said Ja.

“Dod-burn it!” cried the old man; “how in tarnation’s a fellow goin’ to do any figurin’ with a bunch of landlubbers that ain’t never knowed what time it was they was born.”

“On the contrary,” said David, “they always know what time it is.”

“How come?” demanded Ah-gilak.

“It is always noon.”

Ah-gilak snorted. He was in no mood for persiflage. “Well,” he said, “we’ll do the dod-burndest best we can. We may run short of water, but we got plenty food,” he cast his eyes on the warriors coming up from the lower deck.

O-AA WAS AWAKENED by the pitching of the canoe, and opened her eyes to see a wall of water towering above her. She lay in a watery canyon, with another wall of water hemming her in on the other side. This was a harrowing situation that was quite beyond her experience; nothing could save her; one of the walls would topple over on her. But nothing of the kind happened. Instead, the wall came down; and the canoe was lifted to the summit of one just like it. Here, O-aa could see a tumbling mass of wind torn water as far as the eye could reach. The sky was black with angry, rolling clouds that were split by vivid flashes of lightning to the accompaniment of peals of earth shaking thunder. The wind howled and shrieked in a fury of malign hate. Then the canoe sank into another canyon.

This went on and on; there seemed to be no end to it. The cockpit was half full of water; but La-ak had built well-the canoe could neither capsize nor sink and it was so light that it rode the crest of even the most mountainous waves; nothing short of a bolt of lightning could destroy it. This, however, O-aa did not know; she thought that each wave would be the last, as far as she was concerned; but as wave after wave lifted her upon its crest and then dropped her into a new abyss that was exactly like the last one, she took courage; until presently she was enjoying the experience. Oaa had never been on a roller coaster; but she was getting the same sort of thrill out of this experience; and it lasted much longer, and she didn’t have to buy any tickets.

THE SARI, BEING a lighter ship than either of the other two, was blown along before the hurricane much faster; also, as it carried a much smaller sail, its mast did not go by the board as quickly as had that of the Amoz. The third ship had lost its mast even before that of the Amoz had gone; so when the wind abated a little, the Sari, while also by this time a demasted derelict, was far ahead of her sister ships.

Having but a single, open deck, she had lost most of her complement; but she was still staunch of frame and timber-for Perry and David had built her well, much better than the first ship Perry had designed, and for which she was named, which had turned bottomside up at its launching.

The continuing gale, which persisted after the worst of the hurricane had past, was blowing the Sari merrily along to what fate or what destination no man knew. The survivors were only glad that they were alive; like most men of the Stone Age, they had no questions to ask of the future, the present being their only immediate concern; though,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

belying that very assertion, they did catch what rain water they could to augment the supply already aboard.

The deck of the Sari was still a more or less precarious resting place, when one of the Mezops sighted something floating dead ahead. He called his companions' attention to it, and several of them worked their way around the rail to have a look at what he had discovered.

Now, anything floating on this lonely sea was worthy of remark; it was not like the waters off the coast of California, where half the deck loads of Oregon lumbermen bob around to menace navigation and give the Coast Guard the jitters.

"It's a canoe," said Ko, the big Mezop who had discovered it.

"Is there anyone in it?" asked Raj, the captain of the Sari and a chief among the Mezops.

"Wait until it comes up again," said Ko.

"It must be a wonderful canoe, to have lived through such a storm," said Raj.

"It had a most peculiar look," said Ko.

"Here it comes again! I think I see someone in it."

"It is a strange canoe," said Raj. "There are things sticking out from its sides."

"I once saw one like it," said another Mezop; "perhaps many thousand sleeps ago. It was blown to our island with a man who said that he came from an island called Canda, far out on the Lural Az. The canoe had bamboo floats on either side of it. It could not capsize. It had watertight compartments; so it could not sink. We killed the man. I think this canoe is from Canda."

Presently the Sari, which presented a larger surface to the wind than the canoe, overhauled it. O-aa was watching it. Having heard about the great ships of the Sarians from Hodon and David, she guessed that this must be one of them; and she was not afraid. Here was rescue, if she could get aboard. She waved to the men looking over the rail at her.

"It is a girl," said Raj. "Get a rope; we will try to get her aboard."

"She is from Canda," said the sailor who had seen the man from Canda, "she wears the same feather loin cloth that the man from Canda wore. We had better let her drown."

"No," said Raj; "she is a girl." Just what were the implications of this statement, you may guess as well as I. Raj was a man of the Stone Age; so, in many respects he was probably far more decent than men of the civilized outer world; but he was still a man.

One of the outriggers of the canoe bumped against the side of the Sari just as Ko threw a rope to O-aa. The girl seized it as the ship heeled over to starboard and rose on another wave while the canoe dropped into the trough, but O-aa held on. She was jerked from the canoe and banged against the side of the ship; but she clambered up the rope like a monkey-cave girls are that way, probably from climbing inadequate and rickety ladders and poles all their lives.

As she clambered over the side, Raj took her by the arm. "She is not only a girl," he said, "but she is beautiful; I shall keep her for myself."

O-aa slapped him in the face, and jerked away. "I am the daughter of a king," she said. "My mate, my father, and my nine brothers will find you out and kill you if you harm

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

me.”

A MAN FROM THURIA, who was searching for a herd of lidi which had strayed, followed them to the end of the world which is bounded by the nameless strait, There a shadow passed across him. He looked up, thinking to see a thipdar; but there was a tree close by, and he was not afraid. What he saw filled him with amazement and not a little awe. A great round thing, to the bottom of which something seemed to be attached, was floating high in the air out across the nameless strait. He watched it for a long time, until it was only a speck; then he went on searching for his lost lidi which he never found.

He thought a great deal about this remarkable experience as he made his way back to Thuria on his giant lidi. What could the thing have been? He was sure that it was not alive, for he had seen no wings nor any movement of any kind; the thing had seemed just to drift along on the wind.

Being a Stone Age man living in a savage world, he had had so many exciting adventures that he didn't even bother to mention most of them after he got home; unless he hadn't had any adventures at all and hadn't killed any one or anything, nor hadn't been nearly killed himself; then he told his mate about that, and they both marvelled.

But this thing that he had seen above the nameless strait was different; this was something really worth talking about. No one else in the world had ever seen anything like that, and the chances were that nobody would believe him when he told about it. He would have to take that chance, but nothing could change the fact that he had seen it.

As soon as he got home, he commenced to talk about it; and, sure enough, no one believed him, his mate least of all. That made him so angry that he beat her.

“You were probably off in that village of Liba with that frowzy, fat, she-jalok; and are trying to make me believe that you went all the way to the end of the world,” she had said; so perhaps he should have beaten her.

He had been home no great time, perhaps a couple of sleeps, when a runner came from Sari. Everybody gathered around the chief to hear what the runner had to say.

“I have run all the way from Sari,” he said “to ask if any man of Thuria has seen a strange thing floating through the air. It is round-”

“And it has something fastened to the bottom of it fairly shouted the man whom no one would believe.

“Yes!” cried the runner. “You have seen it?”

“I have seen it,” said the man.

His fellow Thurians looked at him in amazement; after all he had told the truth-that was the amazing part of it. His mate assumed an air of importance and an I-toldyou-so expression as she looked around at the other women.

“Where did you see it?” demanded the runner.

“I had gone to the end of the world in search of my lost lidi,” explained the man, “and I saw this thing floating out across the nameless strait.”

“Then she is lost,” cried the runner.

“Who is lost?” demanded the chief.

“Dian the Beautiful who was in the basket which hung from the bottom of the great

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

round ball that Perry called a balloon.”

“She will never be found,” said the chief. “No man knows what lies beyond the nameless strait. Sometimes, when it is very clear, men have thought that they saw land there; that is why it is called a strait; but it may be an ocean bigger than the Sojar Az, which has no farther shore as far as any man knows.”

RELIEVED OF THE weight of the rope, the balloon soared aloft much higher than it had been when the rope first started to drag in the waters of the nameless strait. Soon it was over the land and the city. Dian looked down and marvelled at this wondrous thing built by men.

It was a mean little city of clay houses and narrow winding streets, but to a cave girl of the Stone Age who had never before seen a city, it was a marvelous thing. It impressed her much as New York City impresses the outlanders from Pittsburgh or Kansas City, who see it for the first time.

The balloon was floating so low now that she could see the people in the streets and on the roofs of the buildings. They were looking up at her in wonder. If Dian had never seen a city, she had at least heard of them; but these people had not only never before seen a balloon, but they had never heard of such a thing.

When the balloon passed over the city and out across the country beyond, hundreds of people ran out and followed it. They followed it for a long way as it slowly came closer and closer to the ground.

Presently Dian saw another city in the distance, and when she came close to this second city she was quite close to the ground-perhaps twenty feet above it; then she saw men running from the city. They carried shields and bows and arrows, and for the first time she noticed that those who had followed her all the way from the first city were all men and that they, too, carried shields and bows and arrows.

Before the basket touched the ground the men from the two cities were fighting all around it. At first they fought with bows and arrows, but when they came to close quarters they drew two bladed short-swords from scabbards that hung at their sides and fought hand-to-hand. They shouted and screamed at one another, and altogether made a terrible din.

Dian wished that she could make the balloon go up again, for she did not wish to fall into the hands of such ferocious people, but down came the balloon right in the midst of the fighting. Of course the gas bag dragged it, bumping and jumping along the ground, closer and closer to the second city. Warriors of both sides seized the edge of the basket and pulled and hauled, the men from the first city trying to drag it back and those of the second city trying to haul it on toward their gates.

“She is ours!” cried one of the latter. “See! She tries to come to Lolo-lolo! Kill the infidels who would steal our Noada!”

“She is ours!” screamed the men of the first city; “we saw her first. Kill the infidels who would cheat us of our Noada!”

Now the basket was near the gates of the city, and suddenly a dozen men rushed forward, seized hold of Dian, lifted her from the basket, and carried her through the gates, which were immediately slammed on friend and foe alike.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Relieved of the weight of Dian, the balloon leaped into the air, and drifted across the city. Even the fighters stopped to watch the miracle.

"Look!" exclaimed the warrior of the second city, "it has brought us our Noadā, and now it returns to Karana."

Lolo-lolo was another city of clay houses and winding, crooked streets through which Dian the Beautiful was escorted with what, she realized, was deepest reverence.

A warrior went ahead, shouting, "Our Noadā has come!" and as she passed, the people, making way for her little cortege, knelt, covering their eyes with their hands.

None of this could Dian understand, for she knew nothing of religion, her people being peculiarly free from all superstition. She only knew that these strange people seemed friendly, and that she was being received more as an honored guest than as a prisoner. Everything here was strange to her; the little houses built solidly along both sides of the narrow streets; the yellow skins of the people; the strange garments that they wore-leather aprons, painted with gay designs, that fell from their waists before and behind; the leather helmets of the men; the feather headdress of the women. Neither men nor women wore any garment above the waist, while the children and young people were quite naked.

The armlets and anklets and other metal ornaments of both men and women, as well as the swords, the spear heads, and the arrow tips of the warriors were of a metal strange to Dian. They were bronze, for these people had passed from the Stone Age and the Age of Copper into the Bronze Age. That they were advancing in civilization was attested by the fact that their weapons were more lethal than those of the Stone Age people the more civilized people become, the more deadly are the inventions with which they kill one another.

Dian was escorted to an open square in the center of the village. Here the buildings were a little larger, though none was over one story in height. In the center of one side of the quadrangle was a domed building, the most imposing in the city of Lolo-lolo; although to describe it as imposing is a trifle grandiloquent. It was, however, remarkable, in that these people could design and construct a dome as large as this one.

The shouting warrior who had preceded the escort had run ahead to the entrance of this building, where he shouted, "Our Noadā comes!" repeating it until a number of weirdly costumed men emerged. They wore long leather coats covered with painted ornamentation, and the head of each was covered by hideous mask.

As Dian approached the entrance to the building, these strange figures surrounded her; and, kneeling, covered the eye holes of their masks with their hands.

"Welcome, our Noadā! Welcome to your temple in Lolo-lolo! We, your priests welcome you to The House of the Gods!" they chanted in unison.

The words welcome, priests, and gods were new words to Dian; she did not know what they meant; but she was bright enough to know that she was supposed to, and to realize that they thought her somebody she was not and that this belief of theirs was her best safeguard; so she merely inclined her head graciously and waited for what might come next.

The square behind her had filled with people, who now began to chant a weird pa-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

gan song to the beating of drums, as Dian the Beautiful was escorted into The House of the Gods by the priests of Noada.

UNDER THE EXPERT direction of Ahgilak, the men of the Amoz set up a jury rig; and once more the ship moved on its journey. A man from Amoz was the compass, sextant, chronometer, and navigator; for the navel base of Pellucidar was the little bay beside which were the cliffs of Amoz. Guided by his inherent homing instinct, he stood beside the wheelsman and pointed toward Amoz. His relief was another Amozite, and the period of his watch was terminated when he felt like sleeping. The arrangement was most satisfactory, and the results obtained were far more accurate than those which might have been had by use of compass, sextant, and chronometer.

The wind had not abated and the seas were still high; but the EPS Amoz wallowed and plowed along toward port, which all aboard were now confident it would reach eventually.

"Dod-burn the old hooker," said Ahgilak; "she'll get there some day, as the feller said."

WHEN O-AA SAID to Raj, "I am the daughter of a king," the Mezop cocked an ear, for the word had been grafted onto the language of Pellucidar by Abner Perry, and those who had a right to the title were the heads of "kingdoms" that belonged to the federation known as the Empire of Pellucidar. If the girl was just any girl, that was one thing; but if her people belonged to the Federation, that was something very different indeed.

"Who is your father?" demanded Raj.

"Oose, King of Kali," she replied; "and my mate is Hodon the Fleet One, of Sari. My nine brothers are very terrible men."

"Never mind your nine brothers," said Raj; "that you are a Kalian, or that your mate is Hodon of Sari is enough. You will be well treated on this ship."

"And that will be a good thing for you," said O-aa, "for if you hadn't treated me well, I should have killed you. I have killed many men. My nine brothers and I used to raid the village of Suvi all alone, and I always killed more men than any of my brothers. My mother's brother was also a great killer of men, as are my three sisters. Yes, it will be very well for you if you treat me nicely. I always--"

"Shut up," said Raj, "you talk too much and you lie too much. I shall not harm you, but we Mezops beat women who talk too much; we do not like them."

O-aa stuck her chin in the air, but she said nothing; she knew a man of his word when she met one.

"If you are not from Canda," said the sailor who had once seen a man from Canda, "where did you get that feather loin cloth?"

"I took it from La-ak, the Candian, after I had killed him," replied O-aa, "and that is no lie."

The Sari was blown along before the gale, and at the same time it was in the grip of an ocean current running in the same direction; so it was really making excellent headway, though to O-aa it seemed to be going up and down only.

When they came opposite the Anoroc Islands, the Mezops became restless. They

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

could not see the islands; but they knew exactly the direction in which they lay, and they didn't like the idea of being carried past their home. The four boats of the Sari had been so securely lashed to the deck against the rail that the storm had not been able to tear them away; so Raj, suggested to the Sarians that he and his fellow Mezops take two of the boats and paddle to Anaroc, and that the Sarians take the other two and make for shore, since the ship was also opposite Sari.

The high seas made it extremely difficult and dangerous to launch the boats; but the Mezops are excellent sailors, and they finally succeeded in getting both their boats off; and with a final farewell they paddled away over the high seas.

O-aa looked on at all of this with increasing perturbation. She saw the frail boats lifted high on mighty waves only to disappear into the succeeding trough. Sometimes she thought that they would never come up again. She had watched the lowering of the boats and the embarkation of the Mezops with even greater concern; so, when the Sarians were ready to launch their boats, she was in more or less of a blue funk.

They told her to get into the first boat, but she said that she would go in the second- she wanted to delay the dread moment as long as possible. What added to her natural fear of the sea, was the fact that she was quite aware that the Sarians were not good sailors. Always they have lived inland, and had never ventured upon the sea until David and Perry had decreed that they become a naval power, and even then they had always gone as cargo and not as sailors.

O-aa watched the lowering of the first boat in fear and trepidation. They first lowered the boat into the sea with two men in it; these men tried to hold it from pounding against the side of the ship, using paddles for the purpose. They were not entirely successful. O-aa expected any minute to see it smashed to pieces. The other Sarians who were to go in the first boat slid down ropes; and when they were all in the boat, the Sari suddenly heeled over and capsized it. Some of the men succeeded in seizing the ropes down which they had slid, and these were hauled to the deck of the Sari; for the others there was no hope. O-aa watched them drown.

The remaining Sarians were dubious about lowering the second boat; no one likes to be drowned in a high sea full of ravenous reptiles. They talked the matter over.

"If half the men had taken paddles and held the boat away from the Sari, instead of trying to paddle before the ship rolled away from them, the thing would not have happened," said one. Others agreed with him.

"I think we can do it safely," said another. O-aa didn't think so.

"If we drift around on the Sari, we shall die of thirst and starvation," said a third; "we won't have a chance. Once in the boat, we will have a chance. I am for trying it." Finally the others agreed.

The boat was lowered successfully, and a number of men slid down into it to hold it away from the ship's side.

"Down you go," said a man to O-aa, pushing her toward the rail.

"Not I," said O-aa. "I am not going."

"What! You are going to remain on board the Sari alone?" he demanded.

"I am," said O-aa; "and if you ever get to Sari, which you won't and Hodon is there,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tell him that O-aa is out on the Lural Az in the Sari. He will come and get me.”

The man shook his head, and slid over the side. The others followed him. O-aa watched them as they fended the boat from the side of the ship until it rolled away from them; then they drove their paddles into the water and stroked mightily until they were out of danger. She watched the boat being tossed about until it was only a speck in the distance. Alone on a drifting derelict on a storm-tossed ocean, O-aa felt much safer than she would have in the little boat which she was sure would never reach land.

O-aa had what she considered an inexhaustible supply of food and water, and some day the Sari would drift ashore; then she would make her way home. The greatest hardship with which she had to put up was the lack of some one with whom to talk; and, for O-aa, that was a real hardship.

The wind blew the ship toward the southwest, and the ocean current hastened it along in the same direction. O-aa slept many times, and it was still noon. The storm had long since abated. Great, smooth swells lifted the Sari gently and gently lowered it. Where before the ocean had belabored the ship, now it caressed her.

When O-aa was awake she was constantly searching for land, and at last she saw it. It was very dim and far away; but she was sure that it was land, and the Sari was approaching it-but, oh, so slowly. She watched until she could no longer hold her eyes open, and then she slept. How long she slept no man may know; but when she awoke the land was very close, but the Sari was moving parallel with it and quite rapidly. O-aa knew that she could never reach the land if the ship kept on its present course, but there was nothing that she could do about it.

A strong current runs through the nameless strait from the Sojar Az, into which the Sari had drifted, to the Korsar Az, a great ocean that bounds the western shore of the land mass on which Sari is located. None of this O-aa knew, nor did she know that the land off the port side of the Sari was that dread terra incognita of her people.

The wind, that had been blowing gently from the east, changed into the north and increased, carrying the Sari closer inshore. Now she was so close that Oaa could plainly discern things on land. She saw something that aroused her curiosity, for she had never seen anything like it before; it was a walled city. She had not the slightest idea what it was. Presently she saw people emerging from it; they were running down to the shore toward which the Sari was drifting. As they came closer, Oaa saw that there were many warriors.

O-aa had never seen a city before, and these people had never seen a ship. The Sari was drifting in slowly, and O-aa was standing on the stump of the bowsprit, a brave figure in her red and yellow feather loincloth and the three feathers in her hair.

The Sari was quite close to shore now and the people could see O-aa plainly. Suddenly they fell upon their knees and covered their eyes with their hands, crying, “Welcome, our Noada! The true Noada has come to Tanga-tanga!”

Just then the Sari ran aground and O-aa was pitched head-foremost into the water. O-aa had learned to swim in a lake above Kali, where there were no reptiles; but she knew that these waters were full of them; she had seen them often; so when she came to the surface she began swimming for shore as though all the saurians in the world were at

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

heels. Esther Williams would not have been ashamed of the time in which the little cave girl of Kali made the 100 meters to shore.

As she scrambled ashore, the awestruck warriors of Tanga-tanga knelt again and covered their eyes with their hands. O-aa glanced down to see if she had lost her loin-cloth, and was relieved to find that she had not.

O-AA LOOKED AT the kneeling warriors in amazement; the situation was becoming embarrassing. "What are you doing that for," she demanded. "Why don't you get up?"

"May we stand in your presence?"

asked a warrior.

O-aa thought quickly; perhaps this was a case of mistaken identity, but she might as well make the best of it. If they were afraid of her, it might be well to keep them that way.

"I'll think it over," she said.

Glancing around, she saw some of the warriors peeking at her; but the moment she looked at them they lowered their heads. Even after they had looked at her, O-aa discovered, they still didn't realize their mistake. She saw that they were yellow men, with painted leather aprons, and strange weapons, they wore helmets that O-aa thought were very becoming.

After she had taken her time looking them over, she said, "Now you may stand;" and they all arose.

Several of the warriors approached her.

"Our Noadá," one of them said, "we have been waiting for you for a long time-ever since the first Xexot learned that only with your help can we hope to reach Karana after we die; perhaps that was a million sleeps ago. Our priests told us that some time you would come. Not so many sleeps ago one came out of the air whom we thought was our Noadá, but now we know that she was a false Noadá. Come with us to Tanga-tanga, where your priests will take you into your temple."

O-aa was puzzled. Much that the man had said to her was as Greek to a Hottentot; but little O-aa was smart enough to realize that she seemed to be sitting pretty, and she wasn't going to upset the apple cart by asking questions. Her greatest fear was that they might start asking her questions.

DIAN THE BEAUTIFUL had learned many things since she had come to the city of Lolo-lolo; and she had learned them without asking too many questions, for one of the first things she had learned was that she was supposed to know everything-even what people were thinking.

She had learned that this race of yellow men called themselves Xexots; and that she had come direct from a place called Karana, which was up in the sky somewhere, and that if they were good, she would see that they were sent there when they died; but if they were bad, she could send them to the Molop Az, the flaming sea upon which Pellucidar floats.

She already knew about the Molop Az, as what Pellucidarian does not? The dead who are buried in the ground go there; they are carried down, piece by piece, to the Molop Az by the wicked little men who dwell there. Everyone knows this, because when

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

graves are opened it is always discovered that the bodies have been partially or entirely borne off. That is why many of the peoples of Pellucidar place their dead in trees where the birds may find them and carry them bit by bit to the Dead World that hangs above the Land of Awful Shadow. When people killed an enemy, they always buried his body in the ground; so that it would be sure to go to Molop Az.

She also discovered that being a Noadá, was even more important than being an empress. Here in Lolololo, even the king knelt down and covered his eyes when he approached her; nor did he arise again until she had given him permission.

It all puzzled Dian a great deal, but she was learning. People brought her presents of food and ornaments and leather and many, many little pieces of metal, thin and flat and with eight sides. These the priests, who eventually took most of the presents, seemed to value more than anything else; and if there were not a goodly supply left in the temple every day, they became very angry and scolded the people. But no matter how puzzled she was, Dian dared not ask questions; for she was intuitively aware that if they came to doubt that she was all wise, they would doubt that she was really a Noadá; and then it would go hard with her. After they had worshipped her so devoutly, they might tear her to pieces if they discovered that she was an imposter.

The king of Lolo-lolo was called a gosha; his name was Gamba. He came often to worship at the shrine of the Noadá. The high priest, Hor, said that he had never come to the temple before except on feast days; when he could get plenty to eat and drink and watch the dancing.

"You are very beautiful, my Noadá," said Hor; "perhaps that is why the go-sha comes more often now."

"Perhaps he wants to go to Karana when he dies," suggested Dian.

"I hope that that is all he wants," said Hor. "He has been a very wicked man, failing to pay due respect to the priesthood and even deriding them. It is said that he does not believe in Karana or Molop Az or the teachings of Pu and that he used to say that no Noadá would ever come to Lolololo because there was no such thing as a Noadá."

"Now he knows better," said Dian.

Shortly after this conversation, Gamba came to the temple while Hor was asleep; he knelt before Dian and covered his eyes with his hands.

"Arise, Gamba," said Dian.

She was seated on a little platform upon a carved stool covered with painted leather and studded with bronze; she wore a soft leather robe fastened at the waist with a girdle. The robe was caught over one shoulder, leaving the other bare, and on one side it was slit to her hip and fastened there with a bronze disc. Around her neck were eight strands of carved ivory beads, each strand of a different length, the longest reaching below her waist. Bronze bracelets and anklets adorned her limbs, while surmounting this barbaric splendor was a headdress of feathers.

Dian the Beautiful, who had never before worn more than a sketchy loin cloth, was most uncomfortable in all this finery, not being sufficiently advanced in civilization to appreciate the necessity for loading the feminine form with a lot of useless and silly gewgaws. She knew that Nature had created her beautiful and that no outward adornment

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

could enhance her charms.

Gamba appeared to be in hearty accord with this view, as his eyes seemed to ignore the robe. Dian did not like the look in them.

"Did the go-sha come to worship?" inquired Dian the Goddess.

Gamba smiled. Was there a suggestion of irony in that smile? Dian thought so.

"I came to visit," replied Gamba. "I do not have to come here to worship you-that I do always."

"It is well that you worship your Noada," said Dian; "Pu will be pleased."

"It is not the Noada I worship," said Gamba, boldly; "it is the woman."

"The Noada is not pleased," said Dian, icily; "nor is Pu; nor will Hor, the high priest, be pleased."

Gamba laughed. "Hor may fool the rest of them; but he doesn't fool me, and I don't believe that he fools you. I don't know what accident brought you here, nor what that thing was you came in; but I do know you are just a woman, for there is no such thing as a Noada; and there are a lot of my nobles and warriors who think just as I do."

"The Noada is not interested," said Dian, "the gosha may leave."

Gamba settled himself comfortably on the edge of the dais. "I am the go-sha," he said. "I come and go as I please. I please to remain."

"Then I shall leave," said Dian, rising.

"Wait," said Gamba. "If you are as wise as I think you are, you will see that it is better to have Gamba for a friend than an enemy. The people are dissatisfied; Hor bleeds them for all he can get out of them; and since he has had you with whom to frighten them, he has bled them worse. His priests threaten them with your anger if they do not bring more gifts, especially pieces of bronze; and Hor is getting richer, and the people are getting poorer. They say now that they have nothing left with which to pay taxes; soon the go-sha will not have the leather to cover his nakedness."

"Of these things, you should speak to Hor," said Dian.

"By that speech you convict yourself," exclaimed Gamba, triumphantly, "but yours is a difficult role; I am surprised that you have not tripped before."

"I do not know what you mean," said Dian.

"The Noada is the representative of Pu in Pellucidar, according to Hor; she is omnipotent; she decides; she commands-not Hor. When you tell me to speak to Hor of the things of which the people complain, you admit that it is Hor who commands-not you."

"The Noada does command," snapped Dian; "she commands you to take your complaints to Hor; just as the common people take their complaints to the lesser priests-they do not burden their Noada with them, nor should you. If they warrant it, Hor will lay them before me."

Gamba slapped his thigh. "By Pu!" he exclaimed, "but you are a bright girl. You slipped out of that one very cleverly. Come! let us be friends. We could go a long way together in Lolo-lolo. Being the wife of the go-sha would not be so bad, and a lot more fun than being a Noada cooped up in a temple like a prisoner-which you are. Yes, you are a prisoner; and Hor is your jailer. Think it over, Noada; think it over."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Think what over?" demanded a voice from the side of the room.

They both turned. It was Hor. He came and knelt before Dian, covering his eyes with his hands; then he rose and glared at Gamba, but he spoke to Dian. "You permit this man to sit upon this holy spot?" he demanded.

Gamba eyed Dian intently, waiting for her reply. It came: "If it pleases him," she said, haughtily.

"It is against the laws that govern the temple," said Hor.

"I make the laws which govern the temple," said Dian; "and I make the laws which govern the people of Lolo-lolo," and she looked at Gamba.

Hor looked very uncomfortable. Gamba was grinning.

Dian rose. "You are both excused," she said, and it sounded like a command-it was a command. Then Dian stepped down from the dais and walked toward the door of the temple.

"Where are you going?" demanded Hor.

"I am going to walk in the streets of Lolololo and speak with my people."

"But you can't," cried Hor. "It is against the rules of the temple."

"Didn't you just hear your Noadas say that she makes the temple laws?" asked Gamba, still grinning.

"Wait, then," cried Hor, "until I summon the priests and the drums."

"I wish no priests and no drums," said Dian. "I wish to walk alone."

"I will go with you." Gamba and Hor spoke in unison, as though the line had been rehearsed.

"I said that I wished to go alone," said Dian; and with that, she passed through the great doorway of the temple out into the eternal sunlight of the square.

"Well," said Gamba to Hor, "you got yourself a Noadas, didn't you?" and he laughed ironically as he said it.

"I shall pray Pu to guide her," said Hor, but his expression was more that of an executioner than a suppliant.

"She'll probably guide Pu," said Gamba.

As the people saw their Noadas walking alone in the square, they were filled with consternation; they fell upon their knees at her approach and covered their eyes with their hands until she bade them arise. She stopped before a man and asked him what he did.

"I work in bronze," said the man. "I made those bracelets that you are wearing, Noadas."

"You make many pieces for your work?" Dian had never known a money system before she came to Lolo-lolo; but here she had learned that one could get food and other things in exchange for pieces of bronze, often called "pieces" for short. They were brought in quantities to the temple and given to her, but Hor took them.

"I get many pieces for my work," replied the man, "but-" He hung his head and was silent.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"But what?" asked Dian.

"I am afraid to say," said the man; "I should not have spoken."

"I command you to speak," said Dian.

"The priests demand most of what I make, and the go-sha wants the rest. I have barely enough left to buy food."

"How much were you paid for these bracelets that I am wearing?" demanded Dian.

"Nothing."

"Why nothing?"

"The priests said that I should make them and give them as an offering to the Noda, who would forgive my sins and see that I got into Karana when I died."

"How much are they worth?"

"They are worth at least two hundred pieces," said the man; "they are the most beautiful bracelets in Lolo-lolo."

"Come with me," said Dian, and she continued across the square.

On the opposite side of the square from the temple was the house of the go-sha. Before the entrance stood a number of warriors on guard duty. They knelt and covered their eyes as Noda approached, but when they arose and Dian saw their faces she saw no reverence there—only fear and hate.

"You are fighting men," said Dian. "Are you treated well?"

"We are treated as well as the slaves," said one, bitterly.

"We are given the leavings from the tables of the go-sha and the nobles, and we have no pieces with which to buy more," said another.

"Why have you no pieces? Do you fight for nothing?"

"We are supposed to get five pieces every time go-sha sleeps, but we have not been paid for many sleeps."

"Why?"

"The go-sha says that it is because the priests take all the pieces for you," said the first warrior, boldly.

"Come with me," said Dian.

"We are on guard here, and we cannot leave."

"I, your Noda, command it; come!" said Dian, imperiously.

"If we do as the Noda commands us," said one, "She will protect us."

"But Gamba will have us beaten," said another.

"Gamba will not have you beaten if you always obey me. It is Gamba who will be beaten if he harms you for obeying me."

The warriors followed her as she stopped and talked with men and women, each of which had a grievance against either the priests or the go-sha. Each one she commanded to follow her; and finally, with quite a goodly procession following her, she returned to the temple.

Gamba and Hor had been standing in the entrance watching her; now they followed her into the temple. She mounted the dais and faced them.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Gamba and Hor," she said, "you did not kneel as your Noada passed you at the temple door. You may kneel now."

The men hesitated. They were being humiliated before common citizens and soldiers. Hor was the first to weaken; he dropped to his knees and covered his eyes. Gamba looked up defiantly at Dian. Just the shadow of a smile, tinged by irony, played upon her lips. She turned her eyes upon the soldiers standing beside Gamba.

"Warriors," she said, "take this-" She did not have to say more, for Gamba had dropped to his knees; he had guessed what was in her mind and trembling on her lips.

After she had allowed the two to rise, she spoke to Hor. "Have many pieces of bronze brought," she said.

"What for?" asked Hor.

"The Noada does not have to explain what she wishes to do with her own," said Dian.

"But Noada," sputtered Hor; "the pieces belong to the temple."

"The pieces and the temple, too, belong to me; the temple was built for me, the pieces were brought as gifts for me. Send for them."

"How many?" asked Hor.

"All that six priests can carry. If I need more, I can send them back."

With six priests trailing him, Hor left the apartment, trembling with rage; but he got many pieces of bronze, and he had them brought into the throne room of the temple.

"To that man," said Dian, pointing at the worker in bronze, "give two hundred pieces in payment for these bracelets for which he was never paid."

"But, Noada," expostulated Hor, "the bracelets were gift offerings."

"They were forced offerings-give the man the pieces." She turned to Gamba. "How many times have you slept since your warriors were last paid?"

Gamba flushed under his yellow skin.

"I do not know," he said, surlily.

"How many?" she asked the warriors.

"Twenty-one times," said one of them.

"Give each of these men five pieces for each of the twenty-one sleeps," directed Dian, "and have all the warriors come immediately to get theirs"; then she directed the payment of various sums to each of the others who had accompanied her to the temple.

Hor was furious; but Gamba, as he came to realize what this meant, was enjoying it, especially Hor's discomfiture; and Dian became infinitely more desirable to him than she had been before. What a mate she would be for a go-sha!

"Now," said Dian, when all had received their pieces, "hereafter, all offerings to your Noada will be only what you can afford to give-perhaps one piece out of every ten or twenty; and to your go-sha, the same. Between sleeps I shall sit here, and Hor will pay to everyone who comes the number of pieces each has been forced to give. Those who think one piece in ten is fair, may return that amount to Hor. If you have any other grievances, bring them to your Noada; and they will be corrected. You may depart now."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

They looked at her in wonder and adoration, the citizens and the warriors whose eyes had first been filled with fear and hatred of her; and after they had kneeled, they paid to Hor one piece out of every ten they had received. Laughing and jubilant, they left the temple to spread the glad tidings through the city.

"Pu will be angry," said Hor; "the pieces were Pu's."

"You are a fool," said Dian, "and if you don't mend your ways I shall appoint a new high priest."

"You can't do that," Hor almost screamed, "and you can't have any more of my pieces of bronze!"

"You see," said Gamba to Dian, "that what I told you is true-Hor collects all the pieces for himself."

"I spoke with many people in the square before the temple," said Dian, "and I learned many things from them-one of them is that they hate you and they hate me. That is why I called you a fool, Hor; because you do not know that these people are about ready to rise up and kill us all-the robbed citizens and the unpaid warriors. After I return their pieces that have been stolen from them, they will still hate you two; but they will not hate me; therefore, if you are wise, you will always do what I tell you to do-and don't forget that I am your Noada."

DIAN SLEPT. Her sleeping apartment was darkened against the eternal noonday sun. She lay on a leather couch-a tanned hide stretched over a crude wooden frame. She wore only a tiny loin cloth, for the apartment was warm; She dreamed of David.

A man crept into her apartment on bare feet, and moved silently toward the couch. Dian stirred restlessly; and the man stopped, waiting. Dian dreamed that a tarag was creeping upon David; and she leaped up, awake, to warn him; so that she stood face to face with one of the lesser priests who carried a slim bronze dagger in one hand.

Face to face with Death in that darkened chamber, Dian thought fast. She saw that the man was trembling, as he raised the dagger to the height of his shoulder-in a moment, he would leap forward and strike.

Dian stamped her foot upon the floor. "Kneel!" she commanded, imperiously.

The man hesitated; his dagger hand dropped to his side, and he fell to his knees.

"Drop the dagger," said Dian. The man dropped it, and Dian snatched it from the floor.

"Confess!" directed the girl. "Who sent you here? but do I need ask? It was Hor?"

The priest nodded. "May Pu forgive me, for I did not wish to come. Hor threatened me; he said he would have me killed if I did not do this thing."

"You may go now," said Dian, "and do not come again."

"You will never see me again, my Noada," said the priest. "Hor lied; he said you were not the true Noada, but now I know that you are-Pu watches over and protects you."

After the priest had left the apartment, Dian dressed slowly and went to the temple throne room. As usual, she was ushered in by priests to the accompaniment of drums and chants. The priests, she noticed, were nervous; they kept glancing at her apprehensively. She wondered if they, too, had been commissioned to kill her.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The room was filled with people-priests, citizens, warriors. Gamba was there and Hor. The latter dropped to his knees and covered his eyes long before she was near him. There seemed to be considerable excitement.

By the time she took her place upon the dais everyone in the room was kneeling. After she had bidden them arise, they pressed forward to lay their grievances at her feet. She saw the priests whispering excitedly among themselves.

"What has happened, Hor?" she asked. "Why is everyone so excited?"

Hor cleared his throat. "It was nothing," he said; "I would not annoy my Noda with it."

"Answer my question," snapped Dian.

"One of the lesser priests was found hanging by his neck in his room," explained Hor. "He was dead."

"I know," said Dian; "it was the priest called Saj."

"Our Noda knows all," whispered one citizen to another.

After the people had aired their grievances and those who felt that they had been robbed were reimbursed, Dian spoke to all those assembled in the temple.

"Here are the new laws," she said: "Of all the pieces of bronze which you receive, give one out of ten to the go-sha. These pieces will be used to keep the city clean and in repair and to pay the warriors who defend Lolo-lolo. Give the same number of pieces for the support of my temple. Out of these pieces the temple will be kept in repair, the priests fed and paid, and some will be given to the go-sha for the pay of his warriors, if he does not have enough, for the warriors defend the temple. You will make these payments after each twenty sleeps. Later, I will select an honest citizen to look after the temple pieces.

"Now, one thing more. I want fifty warriors to watch over me at all times. They will be the Noda's Guard. After every sleep that your Noda sleeps, each warrior will receive ten pieces. Are there fifty among you who would like to serve on the Noda's guard?"

Every warrior in the temple stepped forward, and from them Dian selected the fifty largest and strongest.

"I shall sleep better hereafter," she said to Hor. Hor said nothing.

But if Hor said nothing, he was doing a great deal of thinking; for he knew that if he were ever to regain his power and his riches, he must rid himself of the new Noda.

While the temple was still jammed with citizens and warriors, alarm drums, sounded outside in the city; and as the warriors were streaming into the square, a messenger came running from the city gates.

"The Tanga-tangas have come!" he cried; "they have forced the gates and they are in the city!"

Instantly all was confusion; the citizens ran in one direction-away from the gates-and the warriors ran in the other to meet the raiding Tanga-tangas. Gamba ran out with his warriors, just an undisciplined mob with bronze swords. A few had spears, but the bows and arrows of all of them were in their barracks.

The fifty warriors whom Dian had chosen remained to guard her and the temple. The lesser priests fell to praying, repeating over and over, "Our Noda will give us victory!"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Our Noada will save us!" But Hor was more practical; he stopped their praying long enough to have them close the massive temple doors and bar them securely; then he turned to Dian.

"Turn back the enemy," he said; "strike them dead with the swords of our warriors, drive them from the city, and let them take no prisoners back into slavery. Only you can save us!"

Dian noticed an exultant note in Hor's voice, but she guessed that he was not exulting in her power to give victory to the Lolo-lolos. She was on a spot, and she knew it.

They heard the shouting of fighting men and the clash of weapons, the screams of the wounded and the dying. They heard the battle sweep into the square before the temple; there was clamoring before the temple doors and the sound of swords beating upon them.

Hor was watching Dian. "Destroy them, Noada!" he cried with thinly veiled contempt in his voice.

The massive doors withstood the attack, and the battle moved on beyond the temple. Later it swept back, and Dian could hear the victory cries of the Tanga-tangas. After a while the sounds died away in the direction of the city gates; and the warriors opened the temple doors, for they knew that the enemy had departed.

In the square lay the bodies of many dead; they were thick before the temple doors—mute evidence of the valor with which the warriors of Lolo-lolo had defended their Noada.

When the results of the raid were finally known, it was discovered that over a hundred of Gamba's warriors had been killed and twice that number wounded; that all the Tanga-tangan slaves in the city had been liberated and that over a hundred men and women of Lolo-lolo had been taken away into slavery; while the Lolololoans had taken but a single prisoner.

This prisoner was brought to the temple and questioned in the presence of Dian and Gamba and Hor. He was very truculent and cocky.

"We won the great victory," he said; "and if you do not liberate me the warriors of our Noada will come again, and this time they will leave not a single Lolololoan alive that they do not take back into slavery."

"You have no Noada," said Gamba. "There is one Noada, and she is here."

The prisoner laughed derisively. "How then did we win such a glorious victory?" he demanded. "It was with the help of our Noada, the true Noada—this one here is a false Noada; our victory proves it."

"There is only one Noada," said Hor, but he didn't say which one.

"You are right," agreed the prisoner; "there is only one Noada, and she is in Tanga-tanga. She came in a great temple that floated upon the water, and she leaped into the sea and swam to the shore where we were waiting to receive her. She swam through the waters that are infested with terrible monsters, but she was unharmed; only Pu or a Noada could do that—and now she has given us this great victory."

The people of Lolo-lolo were crushed; scarcely a family but had had a member killed, wounded, or taken into slavery. They had no heart for anything; they left the dead lying

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

in the square and in the streets until the stench became unbearable, and all the time the lesser priests, at the instigation of Hor, went among them, whispering that their Noda was a false Noda, or otherwise this catastrophe would never have befallen them.

Only a few came to the temple now to worship, and few were the offerings brought. One, bolder than another, asked Dian why she had let this disaster overwhelm them. Dian knew that she must do something to counteract the effects of the gossip that the lesser priests were spreading, or her life would not be worth a single piece of bronze. She knew of the work of Hor and the priests, for one of the warriors who guarded her had told her.

"It was not I who brought this disaster upon you," she answered the man; "it was Pu. He was punishing Lolo-lolo because of the wickedness of those who robbed and cheated the people of Lolo-lolo."

It was not very logical; but then the worshippers of Pu were not very logical, or they would not have worshipped him; and those who heard her words, spread them through the city; and there arose a faction with which Hor and the lesser priests were not very popular.

Dian sent for Gamba and commanded him to have the dead removed from the city and disposed of, for the stench was so terrible that one could scarcely breathe.

"How can I have them removed?" he asked; "no longer have we any slaves to do such work."

"The men of Lolo-lolo can do it, then," said Dian.

"They will not," Gamba told her.

"Then take warriors and compel them to do it," snapped the Noda.

"I am your friend," said Gamba, "but I cannot do that for you; the people would tear me to pieces."

"Then I shall do it," said Dian, and she summoned her warrior guard and told them to collect enough citizens to remove the dead from the city; "and you can take Hor and all the other priests with you, too," she added.

Hor was furious. "I will not go," he said.

"Take him!" snapped Dian, and a warrior prodded him in the small of the back with his spear and forced him out into the square.

Gamba looked at her with admiration. "Noda or not," he said, "you are a very brave woman. With you as my mate, I could defy all my enemies and conquer Tanga-tanga into the bargain."

"I am not for you," said Dian.

The city was cleaned up, but too late-an epidemic broke out. Men and women died; and the living were afraid to touch them, nor would Dian's guard again force the citizens to do this work. Once more the lesser priests went among the people spreading the word that the disasters which had befallen them were all due to the false Noda.

"Pu," they said, "is punishing us because we have received her."

Thus things went from bad to worse for Dian the Beautiful; until, at last, it got so bad that crowds gathered in the square before the temple, cursing and reviling her; and then

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

those who still believed in her, incited by the agents of Gamba, fell upon them; and there was rioting and bloodshed.

Hor took advantage of this situation to spread the rumor that Gamba and the false Noda were planning to destroy the temple and rule the city, defying Pu and the priests; and that when this happened, Pu would lay waste the city and hurl all the people into the Molop Az. This was just the sort of propaganda of terror that would influence an ignorant and superstitious people. Remember, they were just simple people of the Bronze Age. They had not yet reached that stage of civilization where they might send children on holy crusades to die by thousands; they were not far enough advanced to torture unbelievers with rack and red hot irons, or burn heretics at the stake; so they believed this folderol that more civilized people would have spurned with laughter while killing all Jews.

At last Gamba came to Dian. "My own warriors are turning against me," he told her. "They believe the stories that Hor is spreading; so do most of the citizens. There are some who believe in you yet and some who are loyal to me; but the majority have been terrified into believing that Hor speaks the truth and that if they do not destroy us, Pu will destroy them."

"What are we to do?" asked Dian.

"The only chance we have to live, is to escape from the city," replied Gamba, "and even that may be impossible. We are too well known to escape detection your white skin would betray you, and every man, woman, and child in Lolo-lolo knows his go-sha."

"We might fight our way out," suggested Dian. "I am sure that my warriors are still loyal to me."

Gamba shook his head. "They are not," he said. "Some of my own warriors have told me that they are no longer your protectors, but your jailers. Hor has won them."

Dian thought a moment, and then she said, "I have a plan-listen." She whispered for a few minutes to Gamba, and when she had finished, Gamba left the temple; and Dian went to her sleeping apartment-but she did not sleep. Instead, she stripped off her robe of office and donned her own single garment that she had worn when she first came to Lolo-lolo; then she put the long leather robe on over it.

By a back corridor she came to a room that she knew would be used only before and after ceremonies; in it were a number of large chests. Dian sat down on one of them and waited.

A man came into the temple with his head so bandaged that only one eye was visible; he had come, as so many came, to be healed by his Noda. Unless they died, they were always healed eventually.

The temple was almost deserted; only the members of the Noda's Guard loitered there near the entrance. They were there on Hor's orders to see that the Noda not escape, Hor having told them that she was planning to join Gamba in his house across the square, from which they were arranging to launch their attack against the temple.

The man wore the weapons of a common warrior, and he appeared very tired and weak, probably from loss of blood. He said nothing; he just went and waited before the throne, waited for his Noda to come-the Noda that would never come again. After a

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

while he commenced to move about the throne room, looking at different objects. Occasionally he glanced toward the warriors loitering near the door. They paid no attention to him. In fact they had just about forgotten him when he slipped through a doorway at the opposite side of the room.

The temple was very quiet, and there were only a few people in the square outside. The noonday sun beat down; and, as always, only those who had business outside were in the streets. Lolo-lolo was lethargic; but it was the calm before the storm. The lesser priests and the other enemies of Gamba and the Noda were organizing the mob that was about to fall upon them and destroy them. In many houses were groups of citizens and warriors waiting for the signal.

Two priests came into the throne room of the temple; they wore their long, leather robes of office and their hideous masks; they passed out of the temple through the group of warriors loitering by the door.

Once out in the square, they commenced to cry, "Come, all true followers of Pu! Death to the false Noda! Death to Gamba!" It was the signal!

Warriors and citizens poured from houses surrounding the square. Some of them ran toward the house of the go-sha, and some ran for the temple; and they were all shouting, "Death! Death to Gamba! Death to the false Noda!"

The two priests crossed the square and followed one of the winding streets beyond, chanting their hymn of death; and as they passed, more citizens and warriors ran screaming toward the square, thirsting for the blood of their quarry.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE Amoz had finally brought the ship into the harbor beneath the cliffs of Amoz. David and Hodon and Ghak the Hairy One and the little old man whose name was not Dolly Dorcas had at last completed the long trek from Amoz and come again to Sari.

David found the people saddened and Perry in tears. "What is the matter?" he demanded. "What is wrong? Where is Dian that she has not come to meet me?"

Perry was sobbing so, that he could not answer. The headman, who had been in charge during their absence, spoke: "Dian the Beautiful is lost to us," he said.

"Lost! What do you mean?" demanded David; then they told him, and David Innes's world crumbled from beneath him. He looked long at Perry, and then he went and placed a hand upon his shoulder. "You loved her, too," he said; "you would not have harmed her. Tears will do no good.

Build me another balloon, and perhaps it will drift to the same spot to which she was carried."

They both worked on the new balloon; in fact everyone in Sari worked on it, and the work gave them relief from sorrowing. Many hunters went out, and the dinosaurs which were to furnish the peritonea for the envelope of the gas bag were soon killed. While they were out hunting, the women wove the basket and braided the many feet of rope; and while this was going on, the runner returned from Thuria.

David was in Sari when he came, and the man came at once to him. "I have news of Dian the Beautiful," he said. "A man of Thuria, saw the balloon floating across the nameless strait at the end of the world, high in the air.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Could he see if Dian was still in it?"

asked David.

"No," replied the runner, "it was too high in the air."

"At least we know where to look," said David, but his heart was heavy; because he knew that there was little chance that Dian could have survived the cold, the hunger, and the thirst.

Before the second balloon was finished the survivors of the Sari returned to the village; and they told Hodon all that they knew of O-aa. "She told us to tell you," said one, "that she was adrift in the Sari on the Lural Az. She said that when you knew that, you would come and get her."

Hodon turned to David. "May I have men and a ship with which to go in search of O-aa?" he asked.

"You may have the ship and as many men as you need," replied David.

CHANTING THEIR horrid song of death, the two priests walked through the narrow streets of Lolo-lolo all the way to the gates of the city. "Go to the great square," they shouted to the guard. "Hor has sent us to summon you. Every fighting man is needed to overcome those who would defend the false Noada and Gamba. Hurry! We will watch the gates."

The warriors hesitated. "It is Hor's command," said one of the priests; "and with Gamba and the Noada dead, Hor will rule the city; so you had better obey him, if you know what's good for you."

The warriors thought so, too; and they hurried off toward the square. When they had gone, the two priests opened the gates and passed out of the city. Turning to the right, they crossed to a forest into which they disappeared; and as soon as they were out of sight of the city, they removed their masks and their robes of office.

"You are not only a very brave girl," said Gamba, "but you are a very smart one."

"I am afraid that I shall have to be a whole lot smarter," replied Dian, "if I am ever to get back to Sari."

"What is Sari?" asked Gamba.

"It is the country from which I came."

"I thought you came from Karana," said Gamba.

"Oh, no you didn't," said Dian, and they both laughed.

"Where is Sari?" asked Gamba.

"It is across the nameless strait," replied Dian. "Do you know where we might find a canoe?"

"What is a canoe?" asked Gamba.

Dian was surprised. Was it possible that this man did not know what a canoe was? "It is what men use to cross the water in," she replied.

"But no one ever crosses the water," protested Gamba. "No one could live on the nameless strait. It is full of terrible creatures; and when the wind blows, the water stands up on end."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"We shall have to build a canoe," said Dian.

"If my Noada says so, we shall have to build a canoe," said Gamba, with mock reverence.

"My name is Dian," said the girl; so the man who had been a king and the woman who had been a goddess went down through the forest toward the shore of the nameless strait.

Beneath the long robes of the priests, they had brought what weapons they could conceal. They each had a sword and a dagger, and Gamba had a bow and many arrows.

On the way to the shore. Dian looked for trees suitable for the building of a canoe. She knew that it would be a long and laborious job; but if the Mezops could do it with stone tools, it should be much easier with the daggers and swords of bronze; and then, of course there was always fire with which to hollow out the inside.

When they came to the shore of the nameless strait, they followed it until Gamba was sure there would be no danger of their being discovered by the people of Lolo-lolo or the people of Tangatanga.

"They do not come in this direction much," he said, "nor often so far from the cities. The hunters go more in the other direction or inland. There are supposed to be dangerous animals here, and there is said to be a tribe of wild savages who come up from below to hunt here."

"We should have an interesting time building the canoe," commented Dian.

AT LAST THE SECOND balloon was completed. It was just like the first, except that it had a rip cord and was stocked with food and water, David's extra weight and the weight of the food and water being compensated for by the absence of the heavy rope which had been attached to the first balloon.

When the time came to liberate the great bag, the people of Sari stood in silence. They expected that they would never see David Innes again, and David shared their belief.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed the little old man whose name was not Dolly Dorcas, "there goes a man, as the feller said."

OPE, THE HIGH PRIEST of the temple at Tangatanga, had acquired a Noada; but she was not at all what he had imagined Noada should be. At first she had been docile and tractable, amenable to suggestion; that was while O-aa was learning the ropes, before she learned that she was supposed to be all-wise and all-powerful, deriving her omniscience and omnipotence from some one they called Pu who dwelt in a place called Karana.

Later on, she became somewhat of a trial to Ope. In the first place, she had no sense of the value of pieces of bronze. When they were brought as offerings to her, she would wait until she had a goodly collection in a large bowl which stood beside her throne; then, when the temple was filled with people, she would scoop handfuls of the pieces from the bowl and throw them to the crowd, laughing as she watched them scramble for them.

This made O-aa very popular with the people, but it made Ope sad. He had never had such large congregation's in the temple before, but the net profits had never been

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

so small. Ope spoke to the Noadas about this-timidly, because, unlike Hor of Lolo-lolo, he was a simple soul and guileless; he believed in the divinity of the Noadas.

Furp, the go-sha of Tanga-tanga, was not quite so simple; but, like many an agnostic, he believed in playing safe. However, he talked this matter over with Ope, because it had long been the custom for Ope to split the temple take with him, and now his share was approaching the vanishing point, so he suggested to Ope that it might be well to suggest to the Noadas that, while charity was a sweet thing, it really should begin at home. So Ope spoke to the Noadas, and Furp listened.

"Why," he asked, "does the Noadas throw away the offerings that are brought to the temple?"

"Because the people like them," replied O-aa. "Haven't you noticed how they scramble for them?"

"They belong to the temple."

"They are brought to me," contradicted O-aa. "Anyway, I don't see why you should make a fuss over some little pieces of metal. I do not want them. What good are they?"

"Without them we could not pay the priests, or buy food, or keep the temple in repair," explained Ope.

"Bosh!" exclaimed O-aa, or an expletive with the same general connotation. "The people bring food, which we can eat; and the priests could keep the temple in repair in payment for their food; they are a lazy lot, anyway. I have tried to find out what they do besides going around frightening people into bringing gifts, and wearing silly masks, and dancing. Where I come from, they would either hunt or work."

Ope was aghast. "But you come from Karana, Noadas!" he exclaimed. "No one works in Karana."

O-aa realized that she had pulled a boner, and that she would have to do a little quick thinking. She did.

"How do you know?" she demanded. "Were you ever in Karana?"

"No, Noadas," admitted Ope.

Furp was becoming more and more confused, but he was sure of one point, and he brought it out. "Pu would be angry," he said, "if he knew that you were throwing away the offerings that the people brought to his temple, and Pu can punish even a Noadas."

"Pu had better not interfere," said O-aa; "my father is a king, and my eleven brothers are very strong men."

"What?" screamed Ope. "Do you know what you are saying? Pu is all-powerful, and anyway a Noadas has no father and no brothers."

"Were you ever a Noadas?" asked O-aa. "No, of course you never were. It is time you learned something about Noadas. Noadas have a lot of everything. I have not one father only, but three, and besides my eleven brothers, I have four sisters, and they are all Noadas. Pu is my son, he does what I tell him to. Is there anything more you would like to know about Noadas?"

Ope and Furp discussed this conversation in private later on. "I never before knew all those things about Noadas," said Ope.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Our Noada seems to know what she's talking about," observed Furp.

"She is evidently more powerful than Pu," argued Ope, "as otherwise he would have struck her dead for the things she said about him."

"Perhaps we had better worship our Noada instead of Pu," suggested Furp.

"You took the words out of my mouth," said Ope.

Thus, O-aa was sitting pretty in Tangatanga, as Hodon the Fleet One set sail from Amoz on his hopeless quest and David Innes drifted toward the end of the world in the Dinosaur II, as Perry christened his second balloon.

"You say there is another shore," said Gamba to Dian; "perhaps there is, but we shall never reach it."

"We can try," replied the girl. "Had we remained in your land we should surely have been killed, either by the savages of which you told me, by the wild beasts, or by your own people. If we must die, it is better to die trying to reach safety than to have remained where there never could be safety for us."

"I sometimes wish," said Gamba, "that you had never come to Lolo-lolo."

"You don't wish it any more than I," replied the girl.

"We were getting along very well without a Noada," continued the man, "and then you had to come and upset everything."

"Things should have been upset," said Dian "You and Hor were robbing the people. Pretty soon they would have risen and killed you both, which would have been a good thing for Lolo-lolo."

"I might not have gotten into all this trouble," said Gamba, "if I hadn't fallen in love with you. Hor knew it; and he made that an excuse to turn the people against me."

"You had no business falling in love with me. I already have a mate."

"He is a long way off," said Gamba, "and you will never see him again. If you had come to my house and been my wife before all this happened, you and I could have ruled Lolo-lolo as long as we lived. For a bright girl it seems to me that you are very stupid."

"You were stupid to fall in love with me," said Dian, "but in a moment it may not make any difference one way or another-look what is coming," and she pointed.

"Pu be merciful!" cried the man. "This is the end. I told you that we should not come out upon this water which stands on end and is filled with death."

A great head upon a slender neck rose ten feet above the surface of the sea. Cold, reptilian eyes glared at them, and jaws armed with countless teeth gaped to seize them. The creature moved slowly towards them as though knowing that they could not escape, the water rippling along its glossy sides.

"Your bow and arrow!" cried Dian. "Put an arrow into its body at the waterline, and bend your bow as you have never bent it before. When it comes closer we will use our swords."

Gamba stood up in the canoe and drew a three-foot arrow back to its very tip; and when he released it, it drove true to its mark; burying two-thirds of its length into the saurian's body at the waterline. Screaming with pain and hissing with rage, the creature

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seized the end of the shaft and jerked it from the wound; and with it came a stream of blood spurting out and crimsoning the surface of the water. Then, still hissing and screaming, it bore down upon the two relatively puny humans in the frail canoe. Dian was standing now, her bronze sword grasped-tightly in one hand, her bronze knife in the other. Gamba drove another arrow into the reptile's breast; and then dropped his bow into the bottom of the canoe and seized his sword.

Now, as though by magic, hundreds of small fishes, about a foot long, attracted by the blood of the saurian, were attacking the maddened creature, which paused to wrench the second shaft from its breast. Ignoring the voracious, sharp-fanged fishes which were tearing it to pieces, it came on again to attack the authors of its first hurts. With arched neck it bore down upon them; and as it struck to seize Dian, she met it with her bronze sword; striking at the long neck and inflicting a terrible wound, which caused the creature to recoil. But it came on again, raising a flipper with which it could easily have over-turned or swamped the frail craft.

Gamba, realizing the danger, struck a terrific blow at the flipper while it was still poised above the gunwale of the canoe; and so much strength did he put into it that he severed the member entirely; and simultaneously Dian struck again at the neck. The great head flopped sideways, and with a final convulsive struggle the saurian rolled over on its side.

"You see," said Dian, "that there is still hope that we may reach the other shore. There are few creatures in any sea more terrible than the one which we have killed."

"I wouldn't have given one piece of bronze for our chances," said Gamba.

"They didn't look very bright," admitted Dian, "but I have been in much worse dangers than that before; and I have always come through all right. You see, I did not live in a walled city as you have all your life; and my people were always open to the attacks of wild beasts, and the men of enemy tribes."

They had taken up their paddles again, but now they were out where the full strength of the current gripped them; and they were moving far more rapidly down the strait than they were across it. Because of the current it was hard to keep the bow of the canoe pointed in the right direction. It was a constant and exhausting struggle. They were still in sight of the shoreline they had left, though the distant shore was not yet visible.

"We're not making very much progress in the right direction," said Dian.

"I am very tired," said Gamba. "I do not believe that I can paddle much longer."

"I am about exhausted myself," said the girl. "Perhaps we had better let the current carry us along. There is only one place that it can take us and that is into the Korsar Az. There, there will be no strong current and we can come to shore. As a matter of fact, I believe that we can get much closer to Sari along that coast than we would have been if we had been able to paddle directly across the strait." So Dian the Beautiful and Gamba the Xexot drifted along the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az.

BORNE ALONG BY A gentle wind, David Innes drifted down across the Land of Awful Shadow toward the end of the world and the nameless strait, in the balloon which Abner Perry had named the Dinosaur II.

He knew that his was an almost hopeless venture, with the chances of his balloon

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

coming down near the exact spot where Dian had landed almost nil; and even if it did, where was he to look for her?

Where would she be, in a strange land, entirely unknown to her, provided that she was still alive, which seemed beyond reason; for, supplied with warm coverings as he was, and provided with food and water, he had already suffered considerably from the cold; and he knew that Dian had been without food, or water, or covering of any kind, other than her scant loincloth, at the time that her balloon had broken away.

Yet somehow he thought that she was not dead. It did not seem possible to him that that beautiful creature, so full of life and vigor, could be lying somewhere cold and still, or that her body had been devoured by wild beasts. And so he clung to hope with an almost fanatic zeal.

At last he came to the nameless strait, across which he had never been. He saw the waters of it below him, and far to his right two figures in a canoe. He wondered idly who they might be and where they might be going upon those lonely, danger-ridden waters; and then he forgot them and strained his eyes ahead in search of the farther shore, where, if at all, he felt sure that he might find his mate.

His balloon was floating at an altitude of only about a thousand feet when he approached the opposite side of the strait. His attention was attracted by two things. On the beach below him lay the wreck of a dismasted ship, which he recognized immediately; for he and Perry had designed her and superintended her building. He recognized her, and he knew that she was the Sari.

The other thing that had attracted his attention was a walled city, not far from the shore of the nameless strait. He knew that O-aa had been aboard the Sari when she had been abandoned by her crew; and he realized that perhaps O-aa had been captured by the people who lived in that city.

The presence of a walled city in Pellucidar was sufficiently amazing to arouse many conjectures in his mind. In a walled city there might live a semi-civilized people who would have befriended O-aa; and if Dian had landed near it, she might be in the city, too; or the people might have heard something about her, for a balloon would certainly have aroused their interest and their curiosity.

Now he saw that his balloon had accomplished that very thing; for people were running from the city gates, staring up at him, and calling to him. They might be cursing and threatening him, for all he knew; but he decided to come down, for here were people, and where there would be rumors; and even the faintest rumor might lead him upon the right track. So he pulled the ripcord, and the Dinosaur II settled slowly towards Tangatanga.

As the basket of the balloon touched the ground David Innes found himself surrounded by yellow-skinned warriors, wearing leather aprons painted with gay designs, that fell from their waists both before and behind. On their heads were leather helmets; and they carried swords and knives of bronze, as well as bows and arrows.

Some of the warriors shouted, "It is Pu. He has come to visit our Noadá."

"It is not Pu," cried others. "He comes in the same thing that brought the false Noadá of Lolo-lolo."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

David Innes understood the words, but not the purport of them; only that the reference to the false Noada who had come in a balloon convinced him that Dian the Beautiful had been here. He did not know who Pu might be, but he saw that they were divided among themselves as to his identity; and he also saw that no weapon was drawn against him.

"I have come down out of the sky," he said, "to visit your chief. Take me to him."

To many of the men of Tanga-tanga this sounded as though Pu spoke; and many who had said that it was not Pu wavered in their convictions.

"Go to the house of Furp, the go-sha," said one who was evidently an officer to a warrior, "and tell him that we are bringing a stranger to the temple to visit him and our Noada. If he is indeed Pu, our Noada will recognize him."

The gas bag, partially deflated, still billowed limply above the basket; and when David Innes stepped out and relieved it of his weight the balloon rose slowly and majestically into the air and floated away inland across the city of Tanga-tanga.

When David stood among them, those who thought that he was Pu, the god, fell upon their knees and covered their eyes with their hands. David looked at them in astonishment for a moment and then he quite suddenly realized that they must believe him a deity coming down from heaven; and that the name of this deity was Pu; and he thought to himself, what would a god do under like circumstances? He hazarded a guess, and he guessed right.

"Arise," he said. "Now escort me to the temple," for he recalled that the officer had said that that was where they were taking him. The officer's reference to "our Noada" and to "Furp, the go-sha," meant little or nothing to him; but he decided to maintain a godly silence on the subject until he did know.

They led him through the city gate and along narrow, crooked streets flanked by mean little houses of clay. Here he saw women and children, the women wearing painted leather aprons like the men and having headdresses of feathers, while the children were naked. He noted with some measure of astonishment the bronze weapons and ornaments, and realized that these people had advanced into the age of bronze. Their walled city, their painted aprons, craftsmanship displayed in their weapons and ornaments, suggested that if the inner world were closely following the stages of human development upon the outer crust, these people might soon be entering the iron age.

To David Innes, if his mind had not been solely devoted to the finding of his mate, these people might have presented an interesting study in anthropology; but he thought of them now only as a means to an end.

They had seen Dian's balloon. Had they seen her? Did they know what had become of her?

IN THE CENTER of the city was an open plaza, on one side of which was a large, domed building, a replica of the temple where Dian the Beautiful had ruled for a short time in the city of Lolo-lolo. To this building David Innes was conducted.

Within it were many people. Some of them fell upon their knees and covered their eyes as he entered. These were the ones who were not taking any chances; but the majority stood and waited. Upon a dais at the far end of the room sat a girl in a long leather

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

robe, gorgeously painted in many colors with strange designs. Upon her head was a massive feather headdress. Upon her arms were many bronze bracelets and armlets, and around her neck were strands of ivory beads.

As David Innes came toward the throne O-aa recognized him. They had brought her word that one who might be Pu had come to visit Furp the Go-sha; and now, nimble-witted as ever, she realized that she must perpetuate this erroneous belief as the most certain way in which to insure David's safety.

She rose and looked angrily upon those who had remained standing.

"Kneel!" she commanded imperiously. "Who dares stand in the presence of Pu?"

David Innes was close enough now to recognize her; and as she saw recognition in his eyes, she forestalled anything he might be about to say: "The Noada welcomes you, Pu, to your temple in the city of Tangatanga"; and she held out her hands to him and indicated that he was to step to the dais beside her. When he had done so, she whispered, "Tell them to rise."

"Arise!" said David Innes in a commanding voice. It was a sudden transition from mortality to godhood, but David rose to the occasion, following the lead of little O-aa, daughter of Oose, king of Kali.

"What are your wishes, Pu?" asked Oaa. "Would you like to speak with your Noada alone?"

"I wish to speak with my Noada alone," said David Innes with great and godly dignity; "and then I will speak with Furp the Go-sha," he added.

O-aa turned to Ope the high priest. "Clear the Temple," she said, "but tell the people to be prepared to return later with offerings for Pu. Then they shall know why Pu has come and whether he is pleased with the people of Tanga-tanga, or angry at them. And, Ope, have the lesser priests fetch a lesser bench for me, as Pu will sit upon my throne while he is here."

After the temple was cleared and the bench was brought and they were alone O-aa looked into David's eyes and grinned.

"Tell me what you are doing here, and how you got here," she said.

"First tell me if you have heard anything of Dian the Beautiful," insisted David.

"No," replied O-aa, "what has happened to her? I supposed, of course, that she was in Sari."

"No," replied David, "she is not in Sari. Abner Perry built a balloon and it got away, carrying Dian the Beautiful with it."

"What is a balloon?" asked O-aa; and then she said, "Oh, is it a great, round ball with a basket fastened to it in which a person may ride through the air?"

"Yes," said David, "that is it."

"Then it was Dian who came before I did. They have told me about this thing that happened. The what-youcall-it, balloon, came down low over Tanga-tanga; and they thought that the woman in it was their Noada come from Karana; and they went out and fought with the men of Lolo-lolo for her. But the men of Lolo-lolo got her and she was Noada there until maybe thirty sleeps ago, maybe more. Then the people turned against

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

her; and she disappeared with Gamba, the go-sha of Lolo-lolo, whom the people also wished to kill. What became of them no man knows; but the woman must have been Dian the Beautiful, for she came in that thing that floated through the air. But how did you get here, David Innes?"

"I also came in a balloon," replied David. "I had Abner Perry build one, thinking that it might float in the same direction as had that which bore Dian away; for at this time of year the direction of the wind seldom varies, and a balloon is borne along by the wind."

"They told me that this visitor, who some of them thought might be Pu, had come down from Karana. Now I understand what they meant."

"What is Karana?" asked David.

"It is where Pu lives," explained O-aa. "It is where I live when I am not on earth. It is where those who worship Pu go when they die. It is a mighty good thing for me that Pu came from Karana when he did," she added.

"Why?" asked David. "What do you mean?"

"Ope, the high priest, and Furp, the gosha, don't like me," replied O-aa. "They liked me at first, but now they don't like me any more. They don't like me at all. The people bring offerings to me, and many of these offerings are little pieces of metal, like the metal in my bracelets."

"It is bronze," said David Innes.

"Whatever it is, Ope the high priest and Furp the go-sha are very anxious to get hold of as much of it as they can; but I throw much of it back to the people because it is a lot of fun watching them fight for it; and that is why Ope and Furp do not like me. But it has made me very popular with the people of Tangatanga; and so, not only do Ope and Furp dislike me, but they fear me, also. I cannot understand why Ope and Furp and the People are so anxious to have these silly little pieces of metal."

David Innes smiled. He was thinking of how typical it was of woman that even this little cave girl had no sense of the value of money, before she even knew what money was, or what it was for. "You had better let Ope and Furp have their silly little pieces of metal," he said. "I think you will live longer if you do; for these little pieces of metal men will commit murder."

"It is all very strange," said O-aa. "I do not understand it, but I do not dare ask questions because a Noada is supposed to know everything."

"And I suppose that Pu is supposed to know more than a Noada," remarked David, with a wry smile.

"Of course," said O-aa. "As I know everything that there is to be known, you must know everything that there is to be known, and a great deal that there isn't to be known."

"There is one thing that I don't know, but that I would like to know very much," he said; "and that is where Dian is, and whether she is still alive. After that I would like to know how we are going to get out of here and get back to Sari. You would like to get back, wouldn't you, O-aa?"

"It makes no difference to me now," she said, sadly. "Since Hodon the Fleet One was killed by Blug I do not care where I am."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"But Hodon was not killed by Blug," said David. "It was Blug who was killed."

"And I ran away thinking that Hodon was dead and that I would have to mate with Blug," exclaimed Oaa. "Oh, why didn't I wait and see! Tell me, where is Hodon?"

"Before I left Sari he asked for a ship and some men that he might go out upon the Lural Az and search for you; for he received the message that you sent to him in the event that he was not dead."

"And he will never find me," said O-aa, "and he will be lost on that terrible ocean."

After a while the people came back and brought offerings for Pu. David Innes saw the little pieces of metal and he smiled-crude little coins, crudely minted. For these the high priest and the king would drag the goddess from her pedestal; and doubtless kill her into the bargain. Unquestionably, these men of the bronze age were advancing toward a higher civilization.

O-aa took a handful of the coins and threw them to the people, who scrambled, screaming, upon the floor of the temple, fighting for them. Ope the high priest and Furp the go-sha looked on with sullen scowls, but O-aa felt safer now because she had Pu right there at her side.

After the people had left the temple Ope and Furp remained; and Ope, suddenly emboldened by his anger at the loss of so many pieces of metal, said to David, "How is it that you are so much older than the Noadas?" O-aa was momentarily horrified, for she recalled that, she had once told Ope and Furp that she was the mother of Pu. She had also told them that Pu did everything she told him to do. To be a successful liar one must be quick to cover up; so, before David could answer, O-aa answered for him.

"You should know, Ope, being my high priest, that a Noadas may look any age she wishes. It pleases me not to look older than my son."

David Innes was astounded by the effrontery of the girl. Metaphorically, he took his hat off to her. These people, he thought, would look far before they could find a better goddess than O-aa.

Ope, the high priest, tried another tack.

"Will Pu, who knows all, be kind enough to tell our Noadas that she should not throw away the pieces of bronze that the people bring here as offerings?"

David thought that since he was supposed to know all, it would be best to pretend that he did.

"The Noadas was quite right," said David. "She has done this to teach you not to exact so much from the people. I have known for a long time that your priests were demanding more from them than they could afford to give; and that is one reason why I came from Karana to talk with you; and with Furp, who also exacts more in taxes than he should."

Ope and Furp looked most unhappy; but Furp spoke up and said, "I must pay my warriors and keep the city in repair; and Ope must pay the priests and keep up the temple."

"You are telling Pu the things that he already knows," said David. "Hereafter you will exact less taxes and fewer offerings; demanding only what you require for the proper maintenance of the city and the temple."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Ope was a simple fellow, who believed against his will that this was indeed Pu the god; and he was afraid; but Furp was a skeptic, as well as something of an atheist; at least, he bordered on atheism. But, with Ope, he bowed to the will of Pu; at least temporarily, and with mental reservation.

"There are many things that trouble my mind," said Ope to David, "Perhaps you will explain them to me. We have always been taught that there was Pu; and that he had one daughter, who was our Noda. But now I am not only told that Pu is the son of our Noda, but that she had three fathers, eleven brothers, and four sisters, all of the latter being Nodas."

Even O-aa flushed at the recital of this bare-faced lie which she had told Ope in order to impress him with her knowledge of conditions in Karana. For a moment she was lost, and could think of nothing to say. She only wondered what reply David Innes would make.

"It is all very simple," he said, "when you understand it. As my high priest, Ope, you must know that Pu is all-powerful."

Ope nodded. "Yes, of course, I know that," he said importantly.

"Then you will understand why it is that Pu can be either the son or the father of your Noda. We can change about as we wish; and the Noda can, have as many brothers, or as many sisters, or as many fathers, as I wish her to have. Is that clear to you?"

"Perfectly clear," said Ope. But it was not clear to Furp; and when he left the temple he started to implant in the minds of many a suspicion that the man who had come down out of the skies was not Pu at all, nor was the woman a true Noda. Furp planted the seed and was willing to wait and let it germinate, as he knew it would.

IT HAPPENED that when Hodon the Fleet One reached the coast of Amoz, to set sail upon the Lural Az in search of Oaa, that Raj, the Mezop who had commanded the Sari, was there; and Hodon asked Raj to come with him and take command of the little ship in which he and his warriors were about to embark.

The Mezops were a seafaring people, and Hodon was fortunate in obtaining the services of one to command his ship; and it was also additionally fortunate that it was Raj, because Raj knew exactly where the Sari had been abandoned; and he also knew the winds and the ocean currents. Knowing these, and where they would ordinarily have carried the Sari, Raj set his course for the mouth of the nameless strait. After many sleeps they reached it; but they had to stand off for several more sleeps because of a terrific storm, which because of the seamanship of Raj, they weathered.

When the storm, abated the wind and the currents swept the little ship into the mouth of the nameless strait, swept it close past the coast of the Xexot country, and the spot where the wreck of the Sari had lain until the storm they had just weathered had broken her up and removed all vestiges of the clue of the whereabouts of O-aa that it had previously constituted, and which would have led them immediately to the city of Tanga-tanga.

David Innes and O-aa sat upon the dais in the temple of Pu, ignorant of the fact that their friends were passing so near them.

DIAN THE BEAUTIFUL and Gamba, paddling through the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az, did not see the great balloon that passed in the air high behind them. Only a

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

few thousand yards separated Dian the Beautiful and David at that moment; and it was a cruel fate that had prevented them from knowing how close they had been to a reunion; for David could have brought the balloon down on the shore, and Dian could have returned to it.

Dian had seen to it that the canoe was stocked with food and water before they embarked upon their perilous journey. They took turns sleeping as they let the current carry them along. Time and again they were attacked by fearful creatures of the deep, for this strange thing upon the surface of the water attracted many to them. Some were motivated only by curiosity, but voracious appetites actuated the majority of them; and it was a constant source of surprise to Gamba that they emerged from each encounter victorious.

"I didn't think that we would live to sleep once after we set out from shore," he said.

"I was not so sure myself," replied Dian, "but now I think that we shall get through to the Korsar Az, and then go up the coast to a point opposite Amoz. We can cut across country there; but I believe that greater dangers lie ahead of us on land than on the sea."

"Is it a savage country?" asked Gamba.

"For a long way back from the shores of the Korsar Az it is a very savage country," replied Dian. "I have never been there, but our men who have ventured into it to hunt say that it is infested with savage beasts, and even more savage men."

"I wish," said Gamba, "that I had never seen you. If you had not come to Lolo-lolo, I should still be gosha and safe behind the walls of my city."

"I wish you would stop harping on that," said Dian, "but I may say that if you had been a better go-sha you would still have been there; and if you want to go back, we can paddle to shore, and I will let you out." After many sleeps they reached the end of the nameless strait, which narrowed right at the entrance to the Korsar Az; so that the waters rushed through with terrific velocity, and the little canoe was almost swamped many times before it floated out on the comparatively smooth surface of the Korsar Az. Now they turned in a northeasterly direction hugging the coast; and it was then that the storm that had held Hodon off the mouth of the nameless strait in the Sojar Az, struck them and carried them far from shore.

Driving rain blinded them, and great seas constantly threatened to swamp them; so that while one paddled in an effort to keep the canoe from turning broadside into the trough of the seas, the other bailed with one of the gourds that Dian had thoughtfully brought along for that purpose.

They were both exhausted when a shoreline suddenly rose before them, dimly visible through the rain. Now Dian could see a wide, white beach up which enormous rollers raced, to break thunderously upon the shore; and toward this the storm was carrying them, nor could any puny efforts which they might put forth avert the inevitable end.

It did not seem possible to the girl that they could live that terrific surf; but she determined to try to ride it in, and so she told Gamba to paddle with all his strength; and she did likewise.

On and on the little canoe raced; and then, riding just below the crest of an enormous roller, it shot with terrific speed towards the shore; and, like a surfboard, it was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

carried far up on the beach.

Surprised that they still lived, they leaped out and held it as the water receded; then they dragged it farther up on the shore, out of reach of the breakers.

"I think," said Gamba, "that you must really be a Noda; for no mortal being could come through what we have come through, and live."

Dian smiled. "I have never said that I wasn't," she replied.

Gamba thought this over, but he made no comment. Instead, he said presently, "As soon as the storm is over we can start for Amoz. It is good to be on land again and to know that we shall not have to face the dangers of the sea any more."

"We have a lot more sea to cross," said Dian, "before we reach Amoz."

"What do you mean?" demanded Gamba. "Have we not been driven ashore; are we not on land?"

"Yes, we are on land," replied Dian, "but that storm blew us away from that land where Amoz lies; and as it certainly did not blow us all the way across the enormous Korsar Az, it must have blown us onto an island."

Gamba appeared stunned. "Now there is no hope for us," he said. "This is indeed the end. You are no true Noda, or you would not have permitted this to happen."

Dian laughed. "You give up too easily," she said. "You must have been a very poor go-sha indeed."

"I was a good go-sha until you came along," snapped Gamba, "but now, great Noda," he said sarcastically, "what do we do next?"

"As soon as the storm dies down," replied Dian, "we launch the canoe and set out for shore."

"I do not want to go on the water again," said Gamba.

"Very well, then," replied Dian, "you may remain here; but I am going."

Beyond the beach rose cliffs to the height of a hundred feet or more, topping them Dian could see green, jungle-like verdure; and not far away a waterfall leaped over the cliff into the sea, which lashed the face of the cliff itself at this point, throwing spray so high into the air that at these times the waterfall was hidden. In the other direction the sea again broke against the face of the cliff. They stood upon a narrow, crescent-shaped bit of land that the sea had never as yet claimed. To Gamba, as to you and me, the cliffs looked unscalable; but to Dian the cave girl they appeared merely difficult. However, as she had no intention of scaling them, it made no difference.

They were very uncomfortable for a long while, as they sat drenched by the heavy downpour. There was no cave into which they could crawl, and sleep was out of the question. They just sat and endured; Dian stoically, Gamba grumblingly.

At last, however, they saw the sun shining far out upon the sea, and they knew that the storm was passing over them and that it would soon be gone. Often it is a relief to have that eternal noonday sun hidden by a cloud; but now when the cloud passed they were glad of the sun's warmth again.

"Let us sleep," said Dian, "and if the sea has gone down when we awaken I shall set out again in search of the big land. I think you would be wise if you came with me, but do

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

as you please. It makes no difference to me."

"You have a heart of stone," said the man. "How can you talk like that to a man who loves you?"

"I am going to sleep now," said Dian, "and you had better do likewise;" and she curled up in the wet grass with the hot sun beating down upon her beautiful body.

Dian dreamed that she was back in Sari, and that her people were gathered around her; and that David was there and she was very happy, happier than she had been for a long time.

Presently one of the people standing around her kicked her lightly in the ribs, and Dian awakened. She opened her eyes to see that there really were people surrounding her, but they were not the people of Sari. They were big men, who carried long, heavy spears and great bows; and their loincloths were made of the skins of tarags, and the heads of tarags had been cleverly fashioned to form helmets that covered their heads, with the great tusks pointing downward on either side of their heads at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the quivers which held their arrows at their backs were of the skin of the great carnivores-of the black and yellow hide of the tarag, the huge, sabre-tooth tiger that has been so long extinct upon the outer crust.

"Get up," said one of the men; and Dian and Gamba both came to their feet.

"What do you want of us?" demanded Dian. "We were leaving as soon as the sea went down."

"What were you doing here?" asked the man.

"The storm drove us onto this shore," replied Dian. "We were trying to reach the mainland."

"Who are you?"

"I am Dian, the mate of David Innes, the Emperor of Pellucidar."

"We never heard of you, or him, and I do not know what an emperor is."

"He is what you might call the chief of chiefs," explained Dian. "He has an army and a navy and many guns. He would be your friend if you would protect me and this man."

"What is a navy? What are guns?" demanded this man. "And why should we be kind to you? We are not afraid of this David Innes; we are not afraid of anyone in Pellucidar. We are the men of Tandar."

"What is Tandar?" demanded Dian.

"You mean to say you have never heard of Tandar?" exclaimed the warrior.

"Never," said Dian.

"Neither have I," said Gamba.

The warrior looked at them disgustedly. "This is the Island of Tandar that you are on," he said; "and I am Hamlar, the Chief."

"The sea is going down," said Dian, "and we shall soon be leaving."

Hamlar laughed; it was a nasty sort of a laugh. "You mill never leave Tandar," he said; "no one who comes here ever does."

Dian shrugged. She knew her world, and she knew that the man meant what he said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Come," said Hamlar; and there was nothing to do but follow him.

Warriors surrounded them as Hamlar led the way toward the waterfall. Dian was barefooted, as she had left her sandals on the thwart of the canoe to dry. She would not ask Hamlar if she might get them, for she was too proud to ask favors of an enemy. She kept looking up at the face of the cliff to see where these men had come down, but she saw no sign of a place here that even she could scale; and then Hamlar reached the waterfall and disappeared beneath it, and a moment later Dian found herself on a narrow ledge that ran beneath the falls; and then she followed the warrior ahead of her into the mouth of a cavern that was as dark as pitch and damp with dripping water.

She climbed through the darkness, feeling her way, until presently she saw a little light ahead. The light came from above down a shaft that inclined slightly from the vertical, and leaning against its wall was a crude ladder. Dian had delayed those behind her in the darkness of the cavern, but now she clambered up the ladder like a monkey, soon overtaking those ahead of her. She could hear the warriors behind her growling at Gamba for climbing so slowly; and she could hear his grunts and cries as they prodded him with their spears.

From the top of the shaft a winding trail led through the jungle. Occasionally Dian caught glimpses of large animals slinking along other paths that paralleled or crossed the one they were on; and she saw the yellow and black of the tarag's hide.

A mile inland from the coast they came to a clearing at the foot of a towering cliff, in the sandstone face of which eaves and ledges had been laboriously excavated and cut. She looked with amazement upon these cliff dwellings, which must have required many generations to construct. At the foot of the cliff, warriors lolled in the shade of the trees, while women worked and children played.

At least a score of great tarags slept, or wandered about among the people. She saw a child pull the tail of one, and the great carnivore turned upon it with an ugly snarl. The child jumped back, and the tarag continued its prowling. Aside from that one child, no one seemed to pay any attention to the brutes at all.

Attracted by the sight of Dian and Gamba, warriors, women and children clustered about; and it was evident from their remarks that they seldom saw strangers upon their island. The women wore loincloths and sandals of the skins of tarags. Like the men, the women were rather handsome, with well-shaped heads, and intelligent eyes.

Hamlar motioned to one of the women. "Manai," he said, "this one is yours," and he pointed to Dian. "Does anyone want the man?" he asked, looking around. "If not, we will kill him and feed him to the tarags."

Gamba looked around then, too, hopefully; but at first no one indicated any desire to possess him. Finally, however, a woman spoke up and said, "I will take him. He can fetch wood and water for me and beat the skins of the tarags to soften them"; and Gamba breathed a sigh of relief.

"Come," said Manai to Dian, and led the way up a series of ladders to a cave far up in the face of the cliff.

"This," she said, stopping upon a ledge before an opening, "is the cave of Hamlar, the chief, who is my mate." Then she went in and came back with a bundle of twigs tied

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tightly together with strips of rawhide. "Clean out the cave of Hamlar and Manai," she said, "and see that none of the dirt falls over the edge of the cliff. You will find a big gourd in the cave. Put the dirt into it and carry it down to the foot of the cliff and dump it in the stream."

So Dian the Beautiful, Empress of Pellucidar, went to work as a slave for Manai, the mate of Hamlar, chief of Tandar; and she thought that she was fortunate not to have been killed. After she had cleaned the cave and carried the dirt down and dumped it in the stream, Manai, who had returned to the women at the foot of the cliff, called to her. "'What is your name?" she asked.

"Dian," replied the girl.

"There is meat in the cave," said Manai. "Go and get it and bring it down here and make a fire and cook it for Hamlar and Manai, and for Bovar, their son."

While Dian was broiling the meat she saw Gamba pounding a tarag skin with two big sticks; and she smiled when she thought that not many sleeps ago he had been a king, with slaves to wait upon him.

Hamlar came and sat down beside Manai. "Does your slave work, or is she lazy?" he asked.

"She works," said Manai.

"She had better," said Hamlar, "for if she doesn't work, we will have to kill her and feed her to the tarags. We cannot afford to feed a lazy slave. Where is Bovar?"

"He is asleep in his cave," replied Manai. "He told me to awaken him when we ate."

"Send the slave for him," said Hamlar. "The meat is almost ready."

"Bovar's cave is next to ours, just to the right of it," Manai told Dian. "Go there and awaken him."

So again Dian the Beautiful clambered

up the long series of ladders to the ledge far up on the face of the cliff; and she went to the opening next to that of Hamlar's cave and called Bovar by name. She called several times before a sleepy voice answered. "What do you want?" it demanded.

"Manai, your mother, has sent me to tell you that the meat is ready and that they are about to eat."

A tall young warrior crawled out of the cave and stood erect. "Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am Manai's new slave," replied Dian.

"What is your name?" asked Bovar.

"Dian," replied the girl.

"That is a pretty name," he said; "and you are a pretty girl. I think you are the prettiest girl I ever saw. Where do you come from?"

"I come from Amoz, which lies beside the Darel Az," replied Dian.

"I never heard of either one of them," said Bovar; "but no matter where you come from, you are certainly the prettiest girl I ever saw," repeated Bovar.

"Come down to your meat," said Dian as she turned to the ladder and started to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

descend.

Bovar followed her, and they joined Hamlar and Manai beside the leg of meat that was roasting over the fire on a pointed stick that Dian had driven through it, which was supported by forked sticks at either end.

"The meat is cooked," said Manai who had been turning it during Dian's absence. Dian took it from the fire then and laid it upon some leaves that were spread upon the ground, and Hamlar took his knife of stone and cut off a large piece and held it on a pointed stick to cool a little; and then

Manai cut off a piece, and then Bovar.

"May I eat?" asked Dian.

"Eat," said Hamlar.

Dian drew her bronze knife from its sheath and cut off a piece of meat. The knife cut slickly and smoothly, not like the crude stone weapons of the Tandars.

"Let me see that," said Bovar; and Dian handed him the knife.

"No one ever saw anything like this," said Bovar; and handed it to his father. Both Hamlar and Manai examined it closely.

"What is it?" demanded Hamlar.

"It is a knife," said Dian.

"I don't mean that," said Hamlar. "I mean, what is it made of?"

"It is a metal which the Xexots call 'androde'," replied the girl.

Bovar held out his hand for the knife and Manai gave it to him.

"Who are the Xexots?" said Hamlar.

"They are people who live a long way from here at the other end of the nameless strait."

"Do these people all have knives made of this metal?" asked Hamlar.

"Knives and swords, too." She did not tell him that her sword and Gamba's were in the canoe; for she hoped some day to be able to run away and put to sea again.

Dian held her hand out towards Bovar for the knife. "I shall keep it," he said. "I like it."

"Give it back to her," said Manai. "It is hers. We are not thieves." So Bovar handed the knife back to Dian; but he made up his mind then and there to possess it, and he knew just how to go about it. All that he would have to do would be to push Dian off the ledge that ran in front of this cave; and he was sure that Manai would let him have the knife; provided, of course, that no one saw him push Dian.

MANY SLEEPS had passed since Pu came to Tanga-tanga, but neither David Innes nor O-aa had been able to concoct any scheme whereby they might escape. The temple guard was composed entirely of warriors handpicked by Furp; and as far as David Innes and O-aa were concerned, these guardsmen were their jailers.

Furp was convinced that they were just ordinary mortals who had come to Tangatanga by accident; but he knew that most of the people believed in them, and so he did not dare to act against them too openly. He would gladly have had them killed; for now he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

was not receiving from Ope, the high priest, even a quarter as many pieces of bronze as he had before the advent of the Noadā.

It was a little better since Pu had come, but the avaricious Furp wanted much more. Ope, the high priest, was secretly their enemy, and for the same reason that Furp was; but being a simple and superstitious fool, he had convinced himself that it was really a true god and goddess who sat upon the dais of the temple.

Though their enemies were powerful, those who believed in Pu and the Noadā were many; and they were loved by these because the amount of their taxes and offerings had been greatly reduced, and now they had pieces of bronze with which to buy more food, and such other things as they required.

Both David and O-aa felt the undercurrent of intrigue against them, and they also felt that many of the common people were their friends; but these were never allowed to speak with them alone, as they were always surrounded by the priests of the temple, or the temple guards.

"I wish I might talk with some of these people alone," said David upon one of the few occasions where he had an opportunity to speak even to O-aa without being overheard by a priest or a warrior. "I think they are our friends, and if anyone were plotting against us, they would tell us if they had the opportunity."

"I am sure of it," said O-aa. "They have always liked me; and now they like you, too; for between us we have saved them a great many pieces of metal."

Suddenly David snapped his fingers, "I have it!" he exclaimed. "In the world from which I come there is a great and old religious faith whose communicants may come and confess their sins and be forgiven. They come alone and whisper to the priest, telling him what is troubling their hearts; and no one but the priest may hear them. Pu is going to ordain that the people of Tanga-tanga have this privilege, with one great advantage over confessors in that other world, in that they may confess their sins directly to the ear of their god." "Ope won't let you do it," said O-aa.

"There is a good, old American expression, which you would not understand, that explains succinctly

just how I purpose winning Ope over."

"What are you going to do, then?" inquired O-aa.

"I am going to scare the pants off him," said David.

"What are pants?" asked O-aa.

"That is neither here nor there," replied David.

"Here comes Ope now," said O-aa. "I shall watch while you scare his pants off."

Ope, the high priest, came sinuously towards them; his gait reminding David of the silent approach of a snake.

David glared at the high priest sternly. "Ope," he said in a terrible voice, "I know what you have been thinking."

"I-I-I-I don't know what you mean," stammered the high priest.

"Oh, yes you do," said David, "Don't you know that you could be struck dead for

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

thinking such thoughts?"

"No, most gracious Pu; honestly, I have not thought a bad thought about you. I have not thought of harming you-" and then he stopped suddenly; realizing, perhaps, that he had given himself away.

"I even know what you are thinking this instant," cried David; and Ope's knees smote together. "See that there is no more of it," continued David; "and be sure that you obey my slightest wish, or that of your Noada."

Ope dropped to his knees and covered his eyes with his palms. "Most glorious Pu," he said, "you shall never have reason to upbraid me again."

"And you'd better tell Furp to be careful what he thinks," said O-aa.

"I shall tell him," said Ope, "but Furp is a wicked man, and he may not believe me."

"In spite of the wickedness of Tangatanga, I am going to bring a great blessing to its people," said David. "Have built for me immediately against the wall beside the dais a room two paces square, with a door, and place two benches within it. The room should be two and a half paces high, and have no ceiling."

"It shall be done at once, most glorious Pu," said Ope, the high priest.

"See that it is," said David, "and when it is done, summon the people to the temple; for I would speak to them and explain this wonderful blessing that I am bringing them."

Ope, the high priest, was dying to know what the blessing was, but he did not dare ask; and he was still worrying and cudgeling his brain as he went away to arrange to have artisans build a clay room such as David had demanded.

I am sure that he is really Pu, thought Ope, the high priest. I am thinking good thoughts of him and of our Noada; and I always must. I must keep thinking good thoughts of them, good thoughts; and I must not let Furp put any bad thoughts into my head. He thought this last thought in the hope that Pu was listening to it and would place all the blame upon Furp for the bad thoughts which Ope knew only too well he had been entertaining.

When the little room beside the dais was completed David directed that the people be summoned to the temple; and the lesser priests went out in their hideous masks and beat upon drums and summoned the people to come to the temple of Pu; and the temple was so crowded with people that no more could get in, and those who could not get into the temple filled the plaza.

It was O-aa who addressed them: "Pu has decided to confer upon the people of Tangatanga a great blessing," she said. "Many of you have sinned; and if you have sinned much and have not been forgiven by Pu, it will be difficult for you to get into Karana after you die. Therefore, Pu has had constructed this little room here, where you may go, one at a time, and sit with Pu and confess your sins, that Pu may grant you forgiveness. You cannot all come at once, but between sleeps Pu will listen to the sins of twenty. Go forth into the plaza now and explain this to the others who are there; and then let twenty return to the temple to confess."

The people rushed out into the plaza then, and explained this marvelous thing to those who had not heard O-aa's words; and there was almost a riot before twenty had been selected to lay their sins before Pu prior to the next sleep.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

David went into the little room, and the first of those who were to confess came and kneeled before him, covering his eyes with his hands. David told him to raise and sit on the other bench; and then he said, "You may now confess your sins, and be forgiven."

"Many sleeps ago," said the man, "before you and our Noda came, I stole pieces of metal from a neighbor who had money; because the priests and the gosha had taken so many of mine from me that I did not have any to buy food for my family."

"When you are able to do so, you may return the pieces to the man from whom you took them," said David, "and you shall be forgiven. Did you know," continued David, "that if you have heard words spoken against Pu or the Noda, and have not come and told them, that that is a sin?"

"I did not know that," said the man, "but I have heard words spoken against you and the Noda. The warriors of Furp go among the people, telling them that you and the Noda are not from Karana; are from Molop Az, and that some day soon you will destroy Tanga-tanga and take all its people to the Molop Az for the Little Men to devour. I did not believe that, and there are a good many others who do not believe it, but there are some who do; and these warriors are trying to incite them to murder you and the Noda."

"What is your name?" asked David; and when the man had told him David scratched the name with the point of his dagger in the clay of the wall of the little room. The man watched this process almost fearfully, for he knew nothing of the alphabets, or of writing. "This," said David, "is the sign of your forgiveness. It will stand as long as the temple stands, and Pu and the Noda remain here in safety. Now go on about your business, whatever it may be, and as you work learn the names of as many as possible who are loyal to Pu and the Noda; so that if we are ever in trouble you may summon them to the temple to defend us."

The man left the temple, and it did not occur to him that it was strange that god and a Noda who were all powerful should require the help of mortals to defend them.

After many sleeps David had spoken with many of the citizens; and he had scratched upon the walls of the little room the names of those that he thought could be depended upon to be loyal to him and to O-aa. Nor was Furp idle during this time, for he had determined to rid himself of these two who were constantly increasing their hold upon the people; and depriving him of the pieces of bronze which he had been accustomed to collect from the temple and from the people.

Both Furp and Ope were quite concerned about this new confessional which permitted Pu to speak secretly with the people; but they would have been more concerned had they known that Pu, who now controlled the finances of the temple, was giving pieces of bronze to those who were loyal to him, in the privacy of the confessional, with which to purchase swords, and bows and arrows.

AH-GILAK, THE LITTLE old man from Cape Cod, was much concerned over the fate of David Innes, whom he greatly admired, not only because of his ability and courage, but because David was from Hartford, Connecticut; and he felt that in this outlandish world at the center of the earth New Englanders were bound together by a common tie.

"Dod-burn it," he said to Abner Perry, shortly after David had departed, "how is this ding-busted idiot goin' to get back if that contraption carries him across the nameless

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

strait that everyone says is at the end of the world?"

"I don't know," said Abner Perry sadly; "and to think that it is all my fault, all my fault. Because I am a careless absentminded old fool, I have sent the two I loved best to death."

"Well, settin' around cryin' over split milk ain't goin' to butter no parsnips, as the feller said," rejoined Ah-gilak. "What we ought to do is do sump'n about it."

"What can we do?" asked Abner Perry. "There is nothing that I would not do. I have been seriously considering building another balloon with which to follow them."

"Humph!" ejaculated Ah-gilak. "You sure are the dod-burndest old fool I've ever heard tell of. What good could you do if you did float over the nameless strait in one of them contraptions? We'd only have three of you to look for, instead of two. But I got a idea that I've been thinking about ever since David left."

"What is it?" asked Perry.

"Well, you see," explained the little old man, "afore the Dolly Dorcas was wrecked in the Arctic Ocean in 1845, I'd been aplanin' that when I got back to Cape Cod I'd build me a clipper ship, the finest, fastest clipper ship that ever cut salt water. But then, of course the Dolly Dorcas she did get wrecked, and I drifted down here into this dod-burned hole in the ground; and I ain't never had no chance to build no clipper ship; but now, if I had the men and the tools, I could build one; and we could go down and cross this here nameless strait, and maybe we could find David and this here Dian the Beautiful."

Abner Perry brightened immediately at the suggestion. "Do you think you could do it, Ah-gilak?" he asked. "For if you can, I can furnish you the men and the tools. We haven't got a ship left seaworthy enough to navigate the nameless strait in safety; and if you can build one and sail it, I can furnish the men to build it, and the men to man it."

"Let's start, then," said Ah-gilak. "Procrastination is the mother of invention, as the feller said."

With this hope held out to him, Abner Perry was a new man. He sent for Ghak the Hairy One, who was king of Sari; and who theoretically ruled the loose federation of the Empire of Pellucidar while David was absent. Perry explained to Ghak what Ahgilak had proposed, and Ghak was as enthusiastic as either of them. Thus it was that the entire tribe of Sarians, men, women and children, trekked to Amoz, which is on the Darel Az, a shallow sea that is really only a bay on the coast of the Lural Az.

They took with them arms and ammunition and tools-axes with hammers and chisels and mattocks, all the tools that Perry had taught them to make, after he himself had achieved steel following his discovery and smelting of iron ore, and the happy presence of carbon in the foothills near Sari.

Ghak sent runners to Thuria, Suvi, and Kali; and eventually a thousand men were gathered at Amoz, felling trees and shaping the timbers; and hunters went forth and killed dinosaurs for the peritonea which was to form the sails.

Ah-gilak did not design the huge clipper ship he had planned to build at Cape Cod, but a smaller one that might be equally fast, and just as seaworthy.

Ja, the Mezop, came from the Anoroc Islands with a hundred men who were to help with the building of the ship and man it after it was launched; for the Mezops are the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

seafaring men of the Empire of Pellucidar.

The women fabricated the shrouds and the rigging from the fibers of an abacalike plant; and even the children worked, fetching and carrying.

No man may know how long it took to build that clipper ship, in a world where it is always noon and there are no moving celestial bodies to mark the passage of time; a fact which always annoyed Ahgilak.

"Dod-burn that dod-blasted sun!" he exclaimed. "Why don't it rise and set like a sun oughta? How's a feller goin' to know when to quit work? Gad and Gabriel! It ain't decent."

But the Pellucidarians knew when to quit work. When they were hungry they stopped and ate; when they were sleepy they crawled into the darkest place they could find and went to sleep. Then the little old man from Cape Cod would dance around in a frenzy of rage and profanity, if their sleeping or their eating interfered with the building of the clipper. However, the work progressed, and eventually the clipper was ready to launch. The ways were greased, and every preparation had been made. A hundred men stood by the blocks, ready to pull them away.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed Ah-gilak. "We got to christen 'er, and we plumb forgot to find a name for her."

"You designed her and you built her," said Abner Perry; "and so I think that you are the one who should have the privilege of naming her."

"That's fair enough," said Ah-gilak, "and I'm going to call her the John Tyler, because I voted for him for president at the last election; that is, I voted for him and William Henry Harrison; but when Harrison died."

"Why, that was a hundred and eighteen years ago, man!" exclaimed Abner Perry.

"I don't give a dod-blasted whoop if it was a thousand and eighteen years ago," said Ah-gilak. "I voted for Harrison and Tyler at the last election."

"Do you know what year it is now?" asked Abner Perry.

"David Innes tried to tell me that I was a hundred and fifty-three years old," said Ah-gilak; "but he has lived down here in this dod-burned hole in the ground so long he's crazy. They don't none of you know what year this is. They ain't no years here; they ain't no months! they ain't no weeks; they ain't no days; they ain't nothin' but noon. How you going to count time when it's always noon? Anyhow I'm going to name her the John Tyler."

"I think that's an excellent name," said Abner Perry.

"Now we ought to have a bottle of something to bust on her bow while I christen her," said Ah-gilak. "If a thing's worth doin' at all, don't put it off till tomorrow, as the feller said."

The best substitute for a bottle of champagne which they could find was a clay jug filled with water. Ahgilak held it in his hand and stood by the bow of the clipper. Suddenly he turned to Abner Perry. "This ain't right," he said. "Who ever heard of a man christening a ship?"

"Stellara, the mate of Tartar, the son of Ghak is here," said Abner Perry. "Let her christen the John Tyler;" and so Stellara came, and Ah-gilak told her what to do; and at

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

his signal the men pulled the blocks away immediately after Stellara had broken the jug of water on the bow of the clipper and said, "I christen thee the John Tyler."

The ship slipped down the ways into the Darel Az; and the people of Thuria and Sari and Amoz and Suvi and Kali, screamed with delight.

The cannon had been put aboard her before they launched her; and now they set about rigging her, and this work Ahgilak insisted must be done by the Mezops, who were to be the sailors that manned the ship; so that they would know every rope and spar. It was all a tremendous undertaking for people of the stone age, for they had so much to learn and when the ship was rigged the Mezops had to be drilled in making sail and taking it in quickly. Fortunately they were not only seafaring men, but semi-arbo-real, as they lived in trees on their native islands. They ran up the shrouds like monkeys, and out upon the yardarms as though they had been born upon them.

"They may be red Injuns," said Ah-gilak to Perry, "but they're goin' to make fine sailormen."

Vast quantities of water in bamboo containers was stored aboard, as was the salt meat, vegetables, nuts, and quantities of the rough flour that Abner Perry had taught the Pellucidarians to make.

At last the Mezops were well drilled, and the John Tyler prepared to sail. Ahgilak was skipper, Ja was the first mate and navigator. The second and third mates were Jav and Ko, while Ghak the Hairy One commanded two hundred picked warriors; for, being cavemen, they anticipated having to do battle after they had landed in the terra incognita beyond the nameless strait.

They had neither compass, nor sextant, nor any chronometer; but they had a man from Thuria aboard who could point the general direction; and Ja knew the great ocean currents that flowed directly along their course.

With all sails set to a fair wind, the John Tyler tossed the white water from her bow as she sailed gallantly out into the Lural Az in her quest for David Innes and Dian the Beautiful; and, for the first time since Dian had floated away toward the Land of Awful Shadow, Abner Perry felt hope budding in his breast; and for the first time in one hundred thirteen years the little old man from Cape Cod was really happy.

"I AM TIRED of being a slave," said Gamba to Dian, as they met beside the stream where Dian was filling a large gourd with water and Gamba was washing the lioncloths of his mistress. "That woman nearly works me to death."

"It is better than being killed and fed to the tarags," said Dian.

"I am afraid of the tarags," said Gamba. "I don't see why they let the terrible things bang around the way they do."

"They are tame," said Dian. "Manai told me that they catch them when they are cubs and tame them for hunting and for battle. There is a tribe on the other side of the island, two or three long marches away, with which Hamlar's tribe is always at war. The name of this tribe is Manat; and as the Tandars have tamed and trained tarags, so the Menats have tamed and trained tahos."

"What a terrible place," grumbled Gamba. "Why did we have to be cast ashore here?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"You do not know when you are well off," said Dian. "If you had stayed in Lolololo, you would have been killed; and if that woman had not taken you to be her slave, you would have been fed to the tarags. Are you never satisfied? Bovar said that you were very lucky to find a master at all, because nobody likes your yellow skin."

"And I do not like Bovar," snapped Gamba.

"Why?" asked Dian.

"Because he is in love with you."

"Nonsense!" said Dian.

"It is true," said Gamba. "He is always following you around with his eyes when he is not following you around with his feet."

"He does not want me," said Dian; "he wants my bronze knife"; she called the metal androde.

"In the name of Pu!" exclaimed Gamba. "Look what's coming!"

Dian turned to see three great tarags slinking toward them. She and Gamba were some little distance from the cliff, and the tarags were between the cliff and them, Gamba was terrified, but Dian was not. The great beasts came and rubbed against the girl and nuzzled her hands, while Gamba sat frozen with terror.

"They will not hurt us," said Dian. "They are my friends. Every time, that I can, I bring them pieces of meat."

One of the beasts came and smelled of Gamba; and then it bared its terrible fangs and growled, and the man shook as with palsy. Dian came and pushed against the beast's shoulder to turn it away, at the same time scratching it around one of its ears; then she walked away with her gourd of water, and the three beasts followed her.

For a long time Gamba sat there, wholly unnerved and unable to resume his work. But presently a woman came and spoke to him. "Get to work," she said, "you lazy jalok. What do you suppose I am feeding you for, to sit around and do nothing? Much more of this and you will be tarag meat."

"I am sick," said Gamba.

"Well, you had better get well," said the woman, "for I won't feed any sick slave." So Gamba, who had been a king, resumed his washing; and when it was done, he wrung the water out of the loincloths and took them and stretched them on a flat rock, where he rubbed them and rubbed them with a smooth stone to squeeze every remaining drop of water from them and to keep them soft as they dried in the hot sun. While he was doing this, his mistress came by again.

"You have not cleaned the cave since my last sleep," she said irritably.

"I have been doing the washing," said Gamba. "When that is done, I intended to clean the cave."

"You could have done both twice over if you hadn't been loafing," said the woman. "I don't know what to do. It is almost impossible to get a decent slave lately. I have had to feed the last three to the tarags, and it looks as though you would go the same way."

"I will try to do better," said Gamba. "I will work very hard."

"See that you do," said the woman, whose name was Shrud.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Dian shared a cave with some other slaves on the very lowest level. Such, of course, in a cave village, may be the least desirable, as the lower level is close to the ground and more easily accessible to wild beasts and enemies. She could go into it and sleep when her work was done; but it always seemed that she had no more than closed her eyes before Manai, or Hamlar, or Bovar, called her.

It was Bovar who called her most often, and usually for no other reason than that he wished to talk with her. He had long since given up all thoughts of killing her in order to obtain her bronze dagger, for he had become infatuated with her; but according to the customs of his tribe, he could not take a slave as a mate. However, this fact did not wholly discourage Bovar, for he knew of a cave hidden deep in the jungle; and he toyed with the thought of stealing Dian and taking her there.

Once, after a fitful sleep, Bovar awoke cross and irritable. As he came out on the ledge before his cave he saw Dian walking toward the jungle. Two great tarags paced beside her. Dian was having ideas. She was going to run away, find the beach where her canoe lay, and paddle out upon the Korsar Az in an effort to reach the mainland. She had asked Gamba to go with her, but he had said that they would only be caught and fed to the tarags; so she had decided to go alone.

As Bovar reached the foot of the lowest ladder, one of the great tigers lay stretched in sleep across his path. He gave it a vicious kick in the ribs to make it get out of his way; and the beast sprang up with bared fangs, growling hideously. Bovar prodded it with his long, heavy spear; and it screamed and stepped back; then it slunk away, still growling. Paying no more attention to the tarag, Bovar looked around at the men and women of his tribe, who were down at the foot of the cliff. No one was paying any attention to him. The men were lying around in the shade of trees, half asleep; and the women were working. Bovar walked nonchalantly towards the jungle into which Dian had disappeared. He did not look back; if he had, he would have seen a tarag slinking after him.

Gamba was scrubbing the floor of his mistress' cave. He had carried up a gourd of water and a smooth flat stone and a bundle of grasses. His knees were raw and bleeding from contact with the sandstone floor. As Shrud passed him on her way out

of the cave, she kicked him in the side.

"Work fast, you lazy slave," she said.

This was more than Gamba could endure; it was the last straw, that he, a king, should be so abused and humiliated. He decided that death were better, but that he would have his revenge before he died, so he reached out and seized Shrud by an ankle, and as she fell forward he dragged her back into the cave. She clawed and struck at him, but he leaped upon her and drove his bronze dagger into her heart again and again.

When he realized what he had done, Gamba was terrified. Now he wished that he had gone with Dian, but perhaps she had not gone yet. He washed the blood from his dagger; and dragged Shrud's body to the very farthest end of the cave, where it was darkest; then he came out onto the ledge. Dian was nowhere in sight.

Gamba hastened down the ladders to the lowest level; and going to Dian's cave, he called her name; but there was no response. He started to cross the clearing toward the jungle in the direction that he thought Dian would take to reach the cove where their

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

canoe lay; but he had gone only a short distance when Shrud's mate called to him.

"Where are you going, slave?" he demanded.

"Shrud has sent me into the jungle for fruit," replied Gamba.

"Well, hurry up about it," said the man. "I have work for you to do."

A moment later a runaway slave disappeared into the jungle.

It was noon in the city of Tanga-tanga and in all directions the world curved upward to be lost in the midst of the distance that merged with the blue vault of heaven to form a dome, in the center of which blazed the fiery sun that hung always at zenith.

In the temple a frightened man sat on a bench in the little room, facing his god.

"It will be soon, most gracious Pu," he said; "and if they find that I have been here, they will kill me, for there are those who know that I know."

"How will it come?" asked David.

"A great crowd will come to the temple with offerings. There will be warriors among them, and they will press close to the dais; and when one gives the word, they will fall upon you and our Noada and kill you. Furp will not be here, so that no blame may be attached to him by the people; but it is Furp who is directing it."

David read aloud to the man the names that he had scratched upon the wall of the little room, the names of those who were loyal to him and to O-aa. He read them twice, and then the third time. "Can you remember those names?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the man; "I know them all well."

"Go to them, then, and tell them that Pu says that the time has come. They will know what you mean."

"As I do," said the man; and he knelt, covering his eyes with his hands; and then he arose and left the temple.

David returned to the dais and sat upon his throne; and presently O-aa entered from her apartments, with the lesser priests in their hideous masks and the drums, according to the custom of the temple. She had come to the dais and seated herself beside David Innes.

"The time has come," he whispered to her.

"I have a sword and a dagger under my robe," she said.

Ope the high priest had never been able to persuade David to wear any robes of office, nor had David discarded his weapons. He had told Ope that Pu always dressed thus, and that it was only those who served Pu who wore the robes of office.

Time dragged heavily for these two, who might be waiting for death, but presently men commenced to struggle into the temple. David recognized some among these as those who were loyal to him. He held the first two fingers of his right hand across his breast. It was the sign that had been decided upon to recognize friend from foe; and all the men who had come in, even those whom he had not recognized, answered his sign.

They came and knelt before the dais and covered their eyes; and after they had been bidden to arise, they still stayed close to the dais; and so that it might seem reasonable that they should remain there, David preached to them as he imagined a god might preach to his people. He spoke to them of loyalty and the rewards of loyalty, and the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

terrible fate of those who were untrue to their faith. He spoke slowly, that he might consume time.

More and more men were entering the temple. There were no women, which was unusual; and as each entered David made the sign; and some of them answered and some did not, but those who answered pressed close around the dais until they entirely surrounded the three sides of it, the fourth side being against the wall of the temple.

David continued to talk to them in quiet tones that gave no indication that he anticipated anything unusual, but he watched them carefully; and he noticed that many of those who had not answered this sign were nervous, and now some of them tried to push through closer to the dais; but the loyal ones stood shoulder to shoulder and would not let them pass; and everyone in the temple waited for the signal.

At last it came. A warrior screamed. "Death!" Just the one word he spoke, but it turned the quiet temple into a bedlam of cursing, battling men.

Instantly the signal was given, the loyal ones had wheeled about with drawn swords to face the enemies of their gods; and David had arisen and drawn his sword, too.

The fighting men surged back and forth before the dais. One of Furp's men broke through and struck at O-aa; and David parried the blow and struck the man down; then he leaped to the floor of the temple and joined his supporters; and his presence beside them gave them courage and strength beyond anything that they had ever dreamed of possessing, and it put the fear of God into the hearts of the enemy.

Twenty of Furp's men lay bleeding on the floor and the others turned to flee the wrath of Pu, only to find that retreat was cut off; for, according to David's plan, a solid phalanx of his supporters, armed with bow and arrow, sword, and dagger, barred the way.

"Throw down your arms!" cried David. "Throw down your arms, or die!"

After they had divested themselves of swords and daggers, he told his people to let them go; but he warned them never again to raise their hands against Pu or their Noada.

"And now," he said, "go back to him who sent you; and tell him that Pu has known all his wicked thoughts and has been prepared for him; and because of what he has done he will be turned over to the people to do with as they see fit; and when you go, take your dead and wounded with you."

The vanquished warriors passed out of the temple with their dead and wounded, and David noted with a smile that they crossed directly to the house of the go-sha.

"It was easy to defeat the warriors of Furp when Pu was on our side," said one of David's supporters. "Now that will be the last of Furp, and Pu and his Noada will rule Tanga-tanga."

"Don't be too sure of that," said David. "Furp sent only a handful of men to the temple, for he did not anticipate any resistance. There will be more fighting before this is settled; and if you know of any more loyal men in the city, see that they are armed and ready to come at any moment. Let one hundred remain here constantly, for I am sure that Furp will attack. He will not give up his power so easily."

"Nor a chance to get all of our pieces of bronze as he once did," said one of the men bitterly.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The one hundred men remained and the others left and went through the city searching for new recruits.

David looked at O-aa and smiled and she smiled back. "I wish my eleven brothers had been here," she said.

WHEN GAMBA entered the jungle, he commenced to run, hoping to overtake Dian; but the jungle was such a maze of trails that he soon realized that he was lost; and then he caught a glimpse of a large, yellow-striped creature slinking through the underbrush. Gamba was most unhappy. He wished that he had not killed Shrud, for then he would not have had to run away. He cursed the moment when Dian had come to Lolo-lolo; he cursed Dian; he cursed everybody but himself, who alone was responsible for his predicament; and, still cursing, he climbed a tree.

The tarag that had been stalking him came and stood under the tree and looked up and growled. "Go away," said Gamba, and picked a fruit that grew upon the tree and threw it at the tarag. The great beast snarled and then lay down under the tree.

As soon as Dian had entered the jungle she accelerated her pace; and the two great beasts which accompanied her strode upon either side, for here the trail was wide. Dian was glad of their presence, for they suggested protection, even though she did not know whether or not they would protect her in an emergency.

Presently she came to a natural clearing in the jungle; and when she was halfway across it she heard her name called. Surprised, she turn about to see Bovar.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"To the village," she said.

"You are going in the wrong direction, then. The village is back this way."

"These trails are confusing," said Dian. "I thought I was going in the right direction." She realized now that there was nothing to do but go back to the village and wait for another opportunity to escape. She was terribly disappointed, but not wholly disheartened; because, if it had been so easy to go into the jungle this time without arousing suspicion, there would be other times when it would be just as easy.

As Bovar came toward her she saw a tarag slink into the clearing behind him; and she recognized it immediately as the third member of the terrible trinity the affections of which she had won.

"You won't have to go back to the village now," said Bovar. "You can keep on going in the direction that you were."

"What do you mean?" demanded Dian.

"I mean that I think you were trying to escape, and I am going to help you. I know a cave deep in the jungle where no one will ever find us and where, when I am not with you, you will be safe from man and beast."

"I shall go back to the village," said Dian; "and if you will promise not to annoy me, I will not tell Hamlar nor Manai what you would have done."

"You shall not go back to the village," said Bovar. "You are going with me. If you do not go willingly, I will drag you through the jungle by the hair."

Dian drew her bronze knife. "Come and try it," she said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Don't be a fool," said Bovar. "In the village you are a slave. You have to clean three caves and prepare the food for four people and wash loincloths and fetch carry all day. In the jungle you would have but one cave to clean and but two people to cook for; and if you behaved yourself I would never beat you."

"You will never beat me whether I behave myself or not," replied Dian.

"Throw down that knife," added Bovar. Dian laughed at him and that made Bovar furious. "Drop it and come with me, or I will kill you," he said. "You shall never go back to the village now to spread stories about me. Take your choice, slave. Come with me or die."

Two of the tarags stood close beside Dian, imparting to her a sense of security-whether false or not she did not know, but at least their presence encouraged her to hope. The third tarag lay on its belly a few yards behind Bovar, the tip of its tail constantly moving. Dian knew what that sign often portended, and she wondered.

Bovar did not know that the tarag had followed him, nor that it lay there behind him, watching his every move. What was in the great beast's mind, no one may know. Since cubhood it had been taught to fear these men-things and their long, sharp spears.

Bovar took a few steps toward Dian, his spear poised to thrust. Dian had not thought that he would carry out his threat; but now, looking into his eyes, she saw determination there. She saw the tarag behind Bovar rise with barred fangs and then she had an inspiration. This cave girl knew what an unfailing invitation to any dangerous animal to attack is flight; and so she turned suddenly and ran across the clearing, banking her safety on the affections of these savage beasts.

Bovar sprang after her, his spear poised for the cast; and then the great beast behind him charged and sprang, and the two which had stood beside Dian leaped upon him with thunderous roars.

Dian heard one piercing scream and turned to see Bovar go down with all those terrible fangs buried in his body. That one piercing scream marked the end of Bovar, son of Hamlar the chief; and Dian watched while the great beasts tore the chiefs son to pieces and devoured him. Inured to savagery in a savage world, the scene that she witnessed did not horrify her. Her principle reactions to the event were induced by the knowledge that she had been relieved from an annoying enemy, that she now would not have to return to the village, and that she had acquired a long, heavy spear.

Dian went and sat down in the shade of a tree and waited for the three beasts to finish their grisly meal. She was glad to wait for them, for she wanted their company and protection as far as the entrance to the shaft which led down to the beach where her canoe lay; and while she was waiting she fell asleep.

Dian was awakened by something rubbing against her shoulder and opened her eyes to see one of the tarags nuzzling her. The other two had slumped down near her, but when she awoke they stood up; and then the three of them strode off into the jungle and Dian went with them. She knew that they were going for water and when they had drunk they would sleep; nor was she wrong, for when they had had their fill of water they threw themselves down in the shade near the stream; and Dian laid down with them and they all slept.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Gamba, in his tree a quarter of a mile away from the clearing where Bovar had died, had heard a human scream mingling with the horrid roars and snarls of attacking beasts, and he had thought that Dian had been attacked and was dead; and Gamba, who had been king of Lolo-lolo, felt very much alone in the world and extremely sorry for himself.

IN TANGA-TANGA, Ope the high priest was in a quandary and very unhappy. He and the lesser priests had all been absent from the temple throne room at the time that the followers of Furp had attacked Pu and the Noda; and now he was trying to explain his absence to his god. His quandary was occasioned by the fact that he did not know which side was going to win in the impending battle, of the imminence of which he was fully cognizant.

"It might have seemed a coincidence to some," David was saying, "that you and all of the lesser priests were absent at the time that Furp's men attacked us, but Pu knows that it was no coincidence. You absented yourselves when you knew that we were in danger so that the people might have no grounds upon which to reproach you, no matter what the outcome of the attempt might be. You must now determine once and for all whether you will support us or the go-sha."

The lesser priests were gathered around Ope at the foot of the dais and they looked to him for leadership. He could feel their eyes upon him. He knew the great numerical strength of the go-sha's retainers, but he did not know that Pu, also, had a great number, nor did he know that they were armed. He thought that warriors would be met, if at all, by an unarmed mob which they could easily mow down with arrow, spear and sword.

"I am waiting for your answer," said David.

Ope decided to play safe; he could explain his reasons to Furp later. "We shall be loyal to Pu and our Noda in the future as in the past," he said.

"Very well, then," said David. "Send the lesser priests out into the city to spread the word among the people that they must arm themselves and be prepared to defend the temple."

Ope had not expected anything of this sort and he was chagrined, for at the bottom of his heart he hoped that Furp would succeed in destroying these two, that he might again enjoy to the fullest extent the perquisites and graft of his office; but he realized that he must at least appear to comply with Pu's instructions.

"It shall be done at once," he said. "I shall take the lesser priests into my private chambers and explain their duties to them."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said David. "The lesser priests have heard the instructions that Pu has given. They will go out into the city at once and with each one of them I will send one of these loyal citizens to see that my instructions are carried out honestly."

"But—" commenced Ope.

"But nothing!" snapped David, and he looked at the lesser priests. "You will leave at once, and you will each be accompanied by one of these men," and as he detailed those who were to accompany the lesser priests, he told them that they had his permission, the permission of their god, to destroy any priest who failed to exhort the people enthusias-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tically to defend the temple of Pu.

It was not long thereafter that men commenced to congregate in the plaza before the temple. Through the great temple doorway David could see the house of the go-sha; and soon he saw warriors emerging from it, and others coming into the plaza from other directions. They marched straight toward the temple, before which stood the temple guards and the loyal citizens who had armed themselves to protect Pu and their Noada.

Furp's men tried to shoulder their way through to the temple, but they were immediately set upon, and the battle began. Soon the plaza was filled with the clash of swords, the shouts and curses of men, and the screams and groans of the wounded and dying.

From every narrow, crooked street loyal citizens swarmed to the defense of the temple; so that not one of Furp's men ever reached the great doorway.

Who may know how long that battle lasted, for it was noon when it commenced and noon when it ended; but to David and O-aa it seemed like an eternity. When the last of Furp's retainers who were not dead or wounded were driven from the plaza, the dead lay thick upon every hand; and David Innes was the master of Tangatanga.

Furp and a couple of hundred of his retainers had fled the city; and it was later discovered that they had gone to Lolo-lolo and enlisted in the service of the new gosha there, who was glad to acquire so many trained fighting men.

David sent word to the people that as long as he remained he would rule Tangatanga; and that when he left he would appoint a new go-sha, one who would not rob them; and then he sent for Ope the high priest.

"Ope," he said, "in your heart you have always been, disloyal to your Noada and to Pu; therefore, you are dismissed from the priesthood and banished from Tangatanga. You may go to Lolo-lolo and join Furp, and you may thank Pu that he has not destroyed you as you deserve."

Ope was aghast. He was not prepared for this, as he had felt that he had played safe.

"B-but, Pu," he cried. "The people-the people, what of them? They will not be pleased. They might even turn against you in their wrath. I have been their high priest for many thousand sleeps."

"If you prefer to leave the issue to the people," said David "I will summon them and tell them how disloyal you have been, and turn you over to them."

At that suggestion Ope trembled, for he knew that he was most unpopular among the people. "I shall abide by the will of Pu," he said, "and leave Tangatanga immediately; but it pains me to think that I must abandon my people and leave them without a high priest to whom they may bring their grievances."

"And their pieces of metal," said O-aa.

"The people shall not be without a high priest," said David; "for I now ordain Kanje as the high priest of the temple of Pu." Kanje was one of the lesser priests whom David knew to be loyal.

Ope was conducted to the gates of the city by members of the temple guard, who had orders to see that he spoke to no one; and so the last of David's active and powerful enemies was disposed of, and he could devote his time to plans for returning to Sari,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

after prosecuting a further search for Dian, who, in his heart of hearts, he believed to be lost to him forever.

He sent men out to fell a certain type of tree in a nearby forest, and to bring them into the city; and he sent hunters out to kill several boses, which on the outer crust were the prehistoric progenitors of our modern cattle. These hunters were instructed to bring the meat in and give it to the people; and to bring hides to the women to be cleaned and cured.

When the trees were brought in he had them cut into planks and strips, and in person he supervised the building of a large canoe with mast and sails and watertight compartments forward and aft.

The people wondered at the purpose for which this strange thing was being built, for they were not a seafaring people; and in all their lives had seen only one craft that floated on the water-that in which their Noada had come to them.

When the canoe was completed, he summoned the people to the plaza and told them that he and the Noada were going to visit some of their other temples in a far land, and that while they were gone the people must remain loyal to Kanje and the new go-sha whom David appointed; and he warned Kanje and the new go-sha to be kind to the people and not to rob them.

"For, wherever I am, I shall be watching you," he said.

He had the people carry the canoe down to the nameless strait, and stock it with provisions and with water, and with many weapons-spears, and bows and arrows, and bronze swords; for he knew that the crossing would be perilous.

The entire population of Tanga-tanga, with the exception of the warriors at the gates, had come down to the shore to bid Pu and the Noada farewell; and to see this strange thing set out upon the terrible waters. O-aa had come down with the people, but David had remained at the temple to listen to a report from some of the warriors he had sent out in search of a clue to the whereabouts of Dian. These men reported that they had captured a Lolo-lolo hunter, who claimed to have seen Gamba and Dian as they set forth upon the waters of the nameless strait in their little canoe. So David knew that if Dian were not already dead, she might have returned to Sari.

As he started for the gate of the city he heard sounds of fighting; and when he reached the gate he saw that his people by the shore had been attacked by a horde of warriors from Lolo-lolo and were falling back toward the city.

O-aa had been in the canoe, waiting for David, when the attack came; and in order to escape capture, she had paddled out upon the nameless strait, intending to hold the craft there until the attackers had been dispersed and David could come down to the shore; but the current seized the canoe and carried it out into the strait, and though she paddled valiantly she could do nothing to alter its course.

VIII

THE SHIP in which Hodon sailed in search of the Sari and O-aa was named Lohar, in honor of Laja who had come among the Sarians from the country called Lo-har. It was a little ship, but staunch; and Raj the Mezop brought it through that nameless strait, and out upon the broad bosom of the Korsar Az in safety; and there they were becalmed and the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

current carried them where it would. Their fresh water was almost exhausted and they looked in vain for rain; and then in the distance they sighted land, toward which the current was carrying them. When they were scarcely a mile off shore, the current changed and Hodon saw that they were going to be carried past the end of what he now saw to be an island; so he filled the canoe with empty water containers, and with twenty strong paddlers he set forth for the shore; and as he neared it he saw a waterfall tumbling into the sea over the edge of a cliff.

As the canoe was being drawn up on a narrow beach in a little cove at the far end of which was the Waterfall, Hodon saw another canoe that had been dragged up on the shore; and while his men carried the containers to the waterfall to fill them, he investigated.

In the bottom of the canoe were strange weapons such as he had never seen before, for the swords he found there were of a metal he had never seen before, and the spears and arrows were tipped with it. Upon a thwart rested two tiny sandals. Hodon picked one of them up and examined it, and instantly he recognized it as the work of a Sarian woman; for the women of each tribe have a distinctive way of making their sandals, so that they are easily recognized, as are the imprints they make upon soft earth or sand.

What Sarian woman other than Dian the Beautiful could these tiny sandals belong to? She alone was missing from Sari. Hodon was excited, and he hastened to the waterfall to tell his warriors; and they were excited, too, when they heard that Dian might be on this island.

As the men filled the remaining bamboo containers Hodon discovered the little ledge behind the falls and, in investigating, found the opening into the cavern. He felt his way into it until he came at last to the bottom of the shaft where rested the crude ladder up which Dian's captors had taken her. Hodon returned to his men and they carried the fresh water back to the canoe; and as they looked out toward the Lo-har they saw that a breeze had sprung up and that the little ship was standing in toward shore.

AFTER THE TARAG, TIRED of waiting beneath the tree, arose and slunk off into the jungle, Gamba came down onto the ground and continued his flight. He walked quite a distance this time before he was treed again by sounds which he could not clearly interpret, but which resembled the growls of beasts mingled with the conversation of men; and presently there passed beneath him a dozen warriors, each one of which was accompanied by a ta-ho on a leash. Gamba recognized them instantly as Manats from the other side of the island; for, although he had never seen one of them before, he had heard them and their fierce fighting beasts described many times by the Tandars.

Gamba remained very quiet in his tree, for these Manats looked like fierce and terrible men, almost as fierce and terrible as their grim beasts.

And while Gamba watched them pass beneath him and disappear along the winding trail beyond him, Dian and her three beasts slept beside the little stream where they had quenched their thirst.

Dian was awakened when one of her beasts sprang to its feet with a hideous roar. Approaching were the twelve warriors of Manat with their fighting tahos. The three tarags, roaring and growling, stood between Dian and the approaching Manats.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

With cries of encouragement, the Manats turned their twelve beasts loose; and Dian, seeing how greatly her defenders were outnumbered, turned and fled and while the tarags were battling for their lives, a Manat warrior pursued her.

Dian ran like a deer, far outdistancing the Manat. She had no idea in what direction she was running. She followed jungle trails which turned and twisted, and which eventually brought her back to the very clearing in which Bovar had been killed, and there she saw the Manats and their fighting beasts, but there were only seven of the latter now. Before they had died, her tarags had destroyed five of them.

The warriors did not see Dian, and for that she breathed a sigh of relief as she turned and hurried back along the trail she had come-hurried straight into the arms of the warrior who had been following her. They met at a sharp turn in the trail and he seized her before she could escape. Dian reached for her dagger, but the man caught her wrist; and then he disarmed her.

"You came back to me," he said, in a gruff voice, "but for making me run so far I shall beat you when I get you back to the village of Manat."

Dian said nothing, for she knew that nothing she might say could avail her.

Gamba, sitting disconsolate and terrified in his tree, saw the twelve terrible men of Manat return. There were only seven tahos with them now, but this time there was a woman. Gamba recognized her immediately and his sorrow almost overcame him-sorrow for himself and not for Dian; for now he knew that she could never lead him to the cove where the canoe lay and that if he found it himself, he would have to embark on those terrible waters alone. It is wholly impossible that anyone could have been more unhappy than Gamba. He dared not return to the village; he did not know in which direction the cove lay; and he was alone in a jungle haunted by hungry man-eaters, he who had always lived in the safety of a walled city. From wishing that he had never seen Dian, he commenced to wish that he had never been born. Finally he decided to find a stream near which grew trees bearing edible fruits and nuts; and to live up in these trees all the rest of his life, coming down only for water.

While Gamba was bemoaning his fate, Dian, the leash of one of the dead tahos around her neck, was being led across the Island of Tandar toward the country of the Manats; but she was not bemoaning anything, nor being sorry for herself. She could not clutter her mind with useless thoughts while every moment it must be devoted to thoughts of escape. There was never any telling at what instant an emergency might arise, which would offer her an opportunity; yet, deep in the bottom of her heart, her fate must have seemed utterly hopeless.

The warrior who had captured Dian was an ill-natured brute, and the fact that he had lost his ta-ho in the fight with the tarags had not tended to improve his disposition. He jerked at the rope around Dian's neck roughly and unnecessarily; and occasionally on no pretext at all, he cuffed her; and every time he did one of these things he was strengthening the girl's resolve to kill him. She would almost have abandoned an opportunity to escape for the pleasure of driving a dagger into his heart.

WITH ALL SAILS SET, the John Tyler rode the water of the nameless strait. Ja and Abner Perry and Ahgilak stood upon the quarterdeck.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I think," said Abner Perry, "that we should disembark a searching party as soon as possible. We may have a long shoreline to search and a big country, which we must comb until we find some clew to the whereabouts of Dian"; and the others agreed with him.

As they approached the shore the lookout shouted, "Canoe dead ahead."

As they bore down upon the little craft the bow was filled with warriors and Mezops, watching the canoe and its single occupant. They saw a figure in a long cloak and an enormous feather headdress; and when they got closer they saw that it was a woman.

O-aa had never seen a ship built or rigged like this one, which had evidently discovered her and was headed for her; but as far as she knew, only the men of the Empire of Pellucidar built any sort of ships, and so she hoped against hope that these might be men of the federation.

As the ship came about and lay to near her, she paddled to its side. A rope was thrown to her and she was hauled to the deck.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed Ah-gilak. "Gad and Gabriel! If it isn't O-aa! What in the name of all that's dod-blasted are you doing in that get-up, girl; and out here alone in a canoe?"

"Don't talk so much, old man," retorted O-aa, who could never forget that Ah-gilak had once planned on killing and eating her that time that they were being besieged in the cave by the sabre-toothed men. "Instead of talking," she continued, "get to shore and rescue David Innes."

"David Innes!" exclaimed Abner Perry. "Is David Innes there?"

"He is in that city you can see," replied O-aa, "and if the warriors from Lolo-lolo get in there, they will kill him."

The ship was under way again and Ahgilak brought it as close into shore as he dared, and dropped anchor. Then Ghak and his two hundred warriors, and all but about twenty-five of the Mezops, took to the boats and made for shore. Nearly three hundred veterans they were and they were armed with muskets; crude things, but effective against men of the stone age, or of the bronze age either; for, besides making a good deal of noise, they emitted volumes of black smoke; and those whom they didn't kill, they nearly frightened to death.

In a long thin line, as David had taught them, they approached the city where the warriors of Lolo-lolo were attempting to force the gates.

When they were discovered, the Lolololoans turned to repel them, looking with contempt upon that long, thin line of a few hundred men who had the temerity to threaten a thousand bowmen. But the thunder of the first ragged volley and the black smoke belching at them, as twenty or thirty of their comrades fell screaming to the ground, gave them pause; but they advanced bravely in the face of a second volley. However, with the third volley, those who had not been killed or wounded turned and fled, and Ghak the Hairy One led his troop to the walls of Tangatanga.

"Who are you?" demanded a warrior standing upon the top of the wall.

"We are friends, and we have come for Pu," replied Ghak, who had been coached by O-aa.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Almost immediately the gates were thrown open and David Innes emerged. From the temple he had heard the firing and he was sure that could have come only from the muskets of the empire.

Tears were streaming down Abner Perry's cheeks as he welcomed David aboard the John Tyler.

David listened while they told him of their plans to search for Dian, but he shook his head and told them that it was useless; that Dian had set out upon the nameless strait in a canoe with a single companion and that if she were not already back in Sari, she must be dead.

O-aa had inquired about Hodon, and when she had been told that he had come this way in search of her, she begged David Innes to continue on through the nameless strait into the Korsar Az in search of him; as he must have gone there if he had not already been wrecked.

WHILE GAMBA WAS SEARCHING for a stream where there were trees bearing nuts and fruits he was suddenly confronted by a band of strange warriors bearing weapons such as he had never seen before. He tried to escape them, but they overtook and captured him.

"Who are you?" demanded Hodon.

"I am Gamba, the go-sha of Lolo-lolo," replied the frightened man.

"I think we should kill him," said a

Mezop. "I do not like the color of his skin." "Where is Lolo-lolo," asked Hodon. "It is on the other side of the nameless

strait," replied Gamba, "where the country of the Xexots lies." "You came from the other side of the

nameless strait?" "Yes; I came in a thing called a 'canoe'" "Did you come alone?" asked Hodon. "No; I came with a woman who said that

she came from a country called Sari, and

that her name was Dian the Beautiful." "Where is she?" demanded Hodon. "She was captured by the Manats, who

live on the other side of this island." "Can you lead us there?" "No," replied Gamba; "I am lost. I do

not even know the way to the coast where our canoe lies. If I were you, I would not go to the country of the Manats. They are terrible men and they lead tahos, who can kill and devour you. There were twelve Manats who captured Dian, and they had seven tahos with them."

"Can you show us where she was captured?"

"I can show you where I last saw her," replied Gamba; and this he did. There the trail of men and beasts was plain and to these men of the stone age the following of that trail was simple. They marched rapidly and almost without rest; and though ordinarily it was three long marches to the village of the Manats, Hodon and his hundred warriors reached it shortly after the first sleep.

The men who had captured Dian had only just arrived and her captor had taken her

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

to his cave.

"Now," he said, "I am going to give you the beating I promised you. It will teach you to behave." He seized her by the hair and, stooping, picked up a short stick; and as he stooped Dian snatched her bronze dagger that the man had taken from her from the sheath at his side, and as he raised the stick she plunged it into his heart. With a scream he clutched at his breast; and then Dian gave him a push that sent him out of the cave to topple over the ledge and fall to the ground below.

A moment later she heard shouts and war-cries; and she thought that they were caused by the anger of the Manats because of the killing of one of their fellows; and she stood in the shadow of the cave's entrance with the dagger in her hand, determined to sell her life dearly and take a heavy toll of her enemies.

From below rose the shouts of the warriors and the roars and growls of the tahos; and then, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came the roar of musketry.

Dian could not believe her ears. What other people in all Pellucidar, other than the men of the empire and the inhabitants of far Korsar, had firearms? It was too good to hope that these might be Sarians; and if they were from Korsar, she was as well off here among the Manats as to be captured by the Korsarians.

She stepped to the mouth of the cave and looked out. The fighting was going on almost directly beneath her. The tahos were doing the most damage among the attackers, but one by one they were being shot down; for the Manat warriors, confused by the noise and the smoke, made only an occasional sally, only to be driven back with heavy losses; and at last the remnants of them turned and fled, as the last of the tahos was killed.

Dian had long since seen that these men were no Korsars. She recognized the copper skins of the Mezops and knew that she had been saved.

She stood upon the ledge and called down to them, and the men looked up and cheered. Then she went down and greeted Hodon and the others; and the first question that she asked was of David. "Why is he not with you?" she asked. "Has anything happened to him?"

"He left Sari in a balloon such as carried you away," explained Hodon, "in the hope that it would take him to the same spot where yours landed. We do not know what became of him."

"Why are you here?" asked Dian.

"We were looking for O-aa, who, when last seen, was adrift on the Sari."

"How did you happen to come here and find me?" asked Dian.

"We landed on the island for water and I saw your sandals on the thwart of your canoe; then we came inland in search of you and we found a man who had seen you captured by these Manats. After that it was easy enough to follow their trail."

They started immediately on the long trek back to the other side of the island; and when they entered the jungle Gamba came down out of a tree where he had been hiding during the fighting.

"This man said that he came here in a canoe with you," said Hodon. "Did he offer to harm you in any way?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"No," said Dian.

"Then we shall let him live," said Hodon.

AS THE JOHN TYLER sailed through the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az in what seemed to David a fruitless search for the ship Lo-har and Hodon the Fleet One, a forgotten incident flashed into David's mind. As he had drifted across the strait in the balloon that Abner Perry had built for him that he might prosecute his search for Dian the Beautiful, he had seen, far below, a canoe with two occupants moving with the current toward the Korsar Az. And now, recalling what one of the Xexots had told him of seeing Dian and Gamba, the former king of Lolo-lolo, escaping in a canoe, he was certain that it must have been Dian and Gamba whom he had seen. So now he was anxious as O-aa to sail on into the Korsar Az.

Ah-gilak, the little old man from Cape Cod who could not recall his name but knew that it was not Dolly Dorcas, didn't care where he sailed the ship he had designed and now skippered. He was just content to sail it, a small version of the great clipper ship he had dreamed of building nearly a hundred years before as soon as he got back to Cape Cod.

Of course Abner Perry was more than anxious to prosecute the search for Dian, since it had been through his carelessness that the balloon had escaped and borne her away. Ja and Jav and Ko and the other Mezops of the crew, being borne to the sea, were happy in this, to them, wonderful ship. Ghak the Hairy One, king of Sari, who commanded the two hundred warriors aboard, would have gone to the fiery sea of Molop Az for either David or Dian. The two hundred warriors, while loyal and valiant, were mostly unhappy. They are hill people, the sea is not their element, and most of them were often sick.

On the Lo-har, Hodon and Dian decided to cruise about the Korsar Az for a while before giving up the search for O-aa, whom they had about given up for lost. Then they would return to Sari.

The Korsar Az is a great ocean extending, roughly, two thousand miles from north to south. It is an uncharted wilderness of unknown waters, and all but a short distance of its enormous shoreline a terra incognita to the crews of the Lo-har and the John Tyler, most of whom thought that its waters extended to the ends of the world and were bordered by lands inhabited by fierce enemies and roved by terrifying beasts, in all but the first of which conceits they were eminently correct.

Leaving Tandar, the island upon which he had found Dian, Hodon cruised to the south, while the John Tyler, entering the great sea from the nameless strait, turned her prow toward the north. Thus, fate separated them farther and farther.

Usually within sight of land, the John Tyler cruised in a north-easterly direction along the great peninsula upon the opposite side of which lie most of the kingdoms of the Empire of Pellucidar. For thirteen or fourteen hundred miles the ship held this course, while Ghak's two hundred sturdy warriors, sick and hating the sea, became more and more unhappy and discontented until they were close upon the verge of mutiny.

They were at heart loyal to Ghak and David; but they were men of the stone age, rugged individualists unaccustomed to discipline. Finally they came to Ghak in a body and demanded that the ship turn back and head for home.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Ghak and David listened to them, Ghak with deep sympathy, for he, too, was sick of the sea and longed to feel the solid earth beneath his feet once more. And David listened with understanding and a plan. He spread a crude map before them.

"We are here," he said, pointing, "opposite the narrowest part of the peninsula." He moved his finger in a southeasterly direction. "Here is Sari. Between us and Sari lie seven hundred miles of probably rugged country inhabited by savage tribes and overrun by fierce beasts. You would have to fight your way for all the seven hundred miles." He ran his finger back along the coast and through the nameless strait and then up along the opposite shore of the peninsula to Sari. "The John Tyler is a safe and seaworthy ship," he said. "If you remain aboard her, you may be sick and uncomfortable at times, but you will reach Sari in safety. If you wish, we will land you here; or you may remain aboard. If you stay with the ship, there must be no more grumbling, and you must obey orders. Which do you wish to do?"

"How far is it back to Sari by sea?" asked one of the warriors.

"This is, of course, a crude map," said David, "and we may only approximate correct distances; but I should say that by sea the distance to Sari is around five thousand miles."

"And only seven hundred miles by land," said the man.

"About that. It may be more, it may be less."

"If it were seven hundred miles by sea and five thousand by land," spoke up another warrior, "and I had to fight for every mile, I'd choose to go by land."

As one man, the two hundred cheered and that settled the matter.

"Well, dod-burn my hide!" grumbled Ah-gilak. "Of all the gol-durned idjits I almost nearly ever seen! 'Druther hoof it fer seven hundred miles than ride home in style an' comfort on the sweetest ship ever sailed these do blasted seas. Ain't got no more sense 'n a white pine dog with a poplar tail. Howsumever, good riddance says

I. There'll be more victuals for the rest of us, an' plenty water."

"Then everybody's happy," said David, smiling.

At the point they chose to land the Sarian warriors, there was a narrow beach at the foot of cliffs which extended in both directions as far as they could see. The lead showed no bottom at sixteen fathoms four hundred yards off shore. Closer than that Ah-gilak would not take his ship.

"Too gol-durned close now," he said, "but what wind there is is right."

Standing on and off a light breeze and a calm sea, the boats were lowered and the first contingent was put ashore. David, Abner Perry, Ghak, and O-aa were standing together watching the warriors disembark.

"You will accompany them, Ghak?" asked David.

"I will do whatever you wish," replied the king of Sari.

"Your place is with them," said David; "and if you go with them, you'll be back in Sari much sooner than we shall by sea."

"Why don't we all go with them, then?" suggested Perry.

"I have been thinking the same thing," said David, "but for myself. Not you. It would be too tough a trek for you, Abner. Don't forget that you must be well over ninety by this

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

time.”

Perry bridled. “Stuff and nonsense!” he exclaimed. “I can keep up with the best of you. And don’t you forget, David, that if I am over ninety, you are over fifty. I’m going along, and that settles it. I must get back to Sari. I have important things to do.”

“You will be much more comfortable aboard the John Tyler,” coaxed David. “And what have you so important to do, that can’t wait in a world where time stands eternally still?”

“I have in mind to invent a steam locomotive and build a railway,” said Perry. “I also wish to invent a camera. There is much to be done, David.”

“Why a camera?” asked David. “You can’t kill anyone with a camera.”

Perry looked hurt. The man who had brought gunpowder, muskets, cannon, and steel for swords and spears and knives to this stone age world was inherently the sweetest and kindest of men. But he just couldn’t help “inventing.”

“Be that as it may, David,” he said with dignity, “I am going with Ghak,” and David knew that that was that.

“How about you, O-aa?” asked David. “With two hundred warriors fully armed with Perry’s appurtenances of civilization, I am sure that we can make the journey with safety; and you can be back in Kali with your own people far sooner than by making the long trip by sea.”

“Hodon is somewhere on the Korsar Az searching for me, I am sure,” replied Oaa; “so I shall stay with the John Tyler. I should much rather go with you than remain with the little old man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas and whom I do not like, but by so doing I might miss Hodon.”

“Why do you call him the little man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas, and why do you dislike him?” asked Perry.

“He has forgotten his own name. He had none. So I called him Dolly Dorcas. I thought that was his name, but it was the name of the ship he was on that was wrecked. So he was always saying, ‘my name is not Dolly Dorcas’, until we gave him the name Ah-gilak. And I do not like him, because he eats people. He wanted to eat me. He ate the men who were shipwrecked with him. He was even going to start eating himself. He has told us these things. He is an evil old man. But I shall go with him, because I wish to find my Hodon.”

“Gracious me!” exclaimed Perry. “I had no idea Ah-gilak was such a terrible person.”

“He is,” said O-aa, “but he had better leave me alone, or my thirteen brothers will kill him.”

AS THE JOHN TYLER drew away from shore, little O-aa leaned on the rail and watched the last of the Sari warriors clamber up the cliff and disappear in the junglelike growth which surmounted it. A moment later she heard savage cries floating out over the water, and then the loud reports of muskets and the screams of wounded men.

“Men do not have to wait long for trouble on land,” said Ko, the Mezop Third Mate, who leaned against the rail at her side. “It is well that you decided to return by sea, little one.”

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

O-aa shot a quick glance at him. She did not like the tone of his voice when he called her little one. "My people can take care of themselves," she said. "If necessary they will kill all the men between here and Sari. And I can take care of myself, too," she added.

"You will not have to take care of yourself," said Ko. "I will take care of you."

"You will mind your own business," snapped O-aa.

Ko grinned. Like nearly all the red Mezops he was handsome, and like all handsome men he thought that he had a way with the women and was irresistible. "It is a long way to Sari," he said, "and we shall be much together; so let us be friends, little one."

"We shall not be much together, we shall not be friends, and don't call me little one. I do not like you, red man." Little Oaa's eyes snapped.

Ko continued to grin. "You will learn to like me-little one," he said. O-aa slapped him full in the face. Ko's grin vanished, to be replaced by an ugly snarl. "I'll teach you," he growled, reaching for her.

O-aa drew the long, slim steel dagger David had given her after she came aboard the John Tyler; and then a thin, cracked voice cried, "Avast there, you swabs! What goes on?" It was Ah-gilak the skipper.

"This she-tarag was going to knife me," said Ko.

"That's only part of it," said O-aa. "If he ever lays a hand on me I'll carve his heart out."

Ja, attracted by the controversy, crossed the deck to them in time to hear Ah-gilak say, "She is a bad one. She needs a lesson."

"You had better not try to give me a lesson, eater of men," snapped O-aa, "unless you want your old belly ripped open."

"What is this all about, O-aa?" asked Ja.

"This," said O-aa, pointing at Ko, "spoke to me as no one but Hodon may speak to me. And he called me little one-me, the daughter of Oose, King of Kali. And when I slapped him, he would have seized me-had I not had my knife."

Ja turned on Ko. "You will leave the girl alone," he said. Ko scowled but said nothing, for Ja is king of the Mezops of Anoroc Island, one whom it is well to obey. Ko turned and walked away.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed Ah-gilak. "They's always trouble when you got a woman aboard. I never did like shippin' a woman. I got me a good mind to set her ashore."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Ja.

"I'm skipper of this here ship," retorted Ah-gilak. "I can put her ashore if I've a mind to."

"You talk too much, old man," said Ja, and, walked away.

"You gol-durned red Indian," grumbled Ah-gilak. "That's insubordination. Tarnation! It's mutiny, by gum. I'll clap you in irons the fust thing you know," but he was careful to see that Ja was out of earshot before he voiced his anger and made his threats, for now, except for himself, all the officers and crew of the John Tyler were Mezops and Ja was their king.

The John Tyler beat back along the coast toward the nameless strait; and every wak-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing moment O-aa scanned the surface of the great sea that curved upward, horizonless, to merge in the distant haze with the vault of the heavens. But no sign of another ship rewarded her ceaseless vigil. There was life, the terrible marine life of this young world; but no ship bearing Hodon.

O-aa was very lonely. The Mezops, with the exception of Ko, were not unfriendly; but they are a taciturn people. And, further, she had little in common with them that might have promoted conversation. And she hated the sea, and she was afraid of it.

She might cope with enemies among men, but she could not cope with the sea. She had begun to regret that she had not gone overland to Sari with David Innes and his party.

Time dragged heavily. The ship seemed to stand still. There were adverse winds; and once, when she came on deck after sleeping, they were becalmed and a dense fog lay upon the water. O-aa could not see the length of the ship. She could see no ocean. There was only the lapping of little waves against the hull and the gentle movement of the ship to indicate that she was not floating off into space in this new element. It was a little frightening.

Every sail was set and flapping idly. A figure materialized out of the fog. O-aa saw that it was the little old man, and the little old man saw that the figure by the rail was O-aa. He glanced around. There was no one else in sight. He came closer.

"You are a hoo-doo," he said. "You brought bad winds. Now you have brought calm and fog. As long as you are aboard we'll have bad luck." He edged closer. Oaa guessed what was in his mind. She whipped out her dagger.

"Go away, eater of men," she said. "You are just one step from death."

Ah-gilak stopped. "Gol-durn it, girl," he protested, "I ain't goin' to hurt you."

"At least for once you have spoken the truth, evil old man," said O-aa. "You are not going to hurt me. Not while I have my knife. All that you intended to do was to throw me overboard."

"Of all the dod-gasted foolishness I ever heard, that there takes the cake, as the feller said."

"Of all the dod-gasted liars," O-aa mimicked, "you take the cake, as the feller said. Now go away and leave me alone." O-aa made a mental note to ask some one what the cake was. There is no cake in the stone age and no word for it.

Ah-gilak walked forward and was lost in the fog. O-aa stood now with her back against the rail, that no one might sneak up on her from behind. She knew that she had two enemies aboard-Ko and Ah-gilak. She must be always on the alert. The outlook was not pleasant. The voyage would be very long, and during it there would be many opportunities for one or the other of them to harm her.

Again she berated herself for not having accompanied David and his party. The sea was not her element. She longed for the feel of solid ground beneath her feet.

Even the countless dangers of that savage world seemed less menacing than this vile old man who bragged of his cannibalism. She had seen men look at her with hunger in their eyes, but the hunger look in the watery old eyes of Ah-gilak was different. It connoted hunger for food; and it frightened her more even than would have the blazing

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

eyes of some terrible carnivore, for it was unclean, repulsive.

A little breeze bellied the sails of the John Tyler. It sent the fog swirling about the deck. Now the ship moved again. Looking across the deck, O-aa saw something looming close alongside the John Tyler. It was a land-a great, green clad cliff half hid by the swirling fog. She heard Ah-gilak screaming orders. She heard the deep voice of Ja directing the work of the sailors-a calm, unruffled voice.

O-aa ran across the deck to the opposite rail. The great cliff towered high above, lost in the fog. It was scarcely a hundred feet away. At the waterline was a narrow beach that could scarcely be dignified by the name of beach. It was little more than a foothold at the base of this vertical escarpment.

Here was land-beloved land! Its call was irresistible. O-aa stepped to the top of the rail and dived into the sea. She struck out strongly for the little ledge. A kind Providence protected her. No voracious denizen of this swarming sea attacked her, and she reached her goal safely.

As she drew herself up onto the ledge the fog closed in again, and the John Tyler disappeared from view. But she could still hear the voices of Ah-gilak and Ja.

O-aa took stock of her situation. If the tide was out, then the ledge would be submerged at high tide. She examined the face of the cliff in her immediate vicinity, and concluded that the tide was out, for she could see the marks of high tides far above her head.

Because of the fog, she could not see far either to the right or to the left above her. To most, such a situation would have been appalling; but the people of Kali are cliff dwellers. And O-aa, being a Kalian, had spent all of her life scaling cliffs. She had found that there are few cliffs that offer no footholds. This is especially true of cliffs the faces of which support vegetation, and this cliff was clothed in green.

O-aa wished that the fog would go away before the tide came in. She would have liked to examine the cliff more carefully before starting the ascent. She could no longer hear voices aboard the John Tyler. O-aa was alone in a strange world that contained no other living thing. A tiny little world encompassed by fog.

A wave rolled in and lapped her ankles. O-aa looked down. The tide was coming in. Something else was coming in, also. A huge reptile with formidable jaws was swimming toward her, and it was eyeing her quite as hungrily as had Ah-gilak. It was a nameless thing to O-aa, this forty foot monster. I would have advantaged little Oaa nothing to have known that this creature that was intent on reaching up and dragging her down into the sea was Tylosaurus, one of the rulers of the Cretaceous seas of the outer crust, eons ago.

AH-GILAK HAD SEEN the green cliff loom close alongside the John Tyler at the same moment as had O-aa, but it connoted something very different to the ancient skipper than to O-aa. To the one it meant disaster, to the other escape. And each reacted in his own way. Ah-gilak screamed orders and O-aa dived overboard.

With the lightly freshening breeze, the ship hauled away from danger, at least from the imminent threat of that particular cliff. But who knew what lay just ahead in the fog?

Again the wind died, the sails hung limp, the fog closed in tighter than before. The tide and a strong current bore the helpless ship on. But where? Abner Perry's crude

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

compass did 180s and 360s, as the current and the tide turned the John Tyler slowly this way and that.

"She ain't nuthin' but a dod-burned derelict," groaned Ah-gilak, "jest driftin' around. It all comes from shippin' a woman, durn 'em. If we're driftin' to sea, we're all right. If we're driftin' t'other way, she'll go ashore. Gad an' Gabriel! I'd ruther pitch a whole slew o' women overboard than lose a sweet ship like the John Tyler."

"Shut up!" said Ja. "You talk too much. Listen!"

With a palm, Ah-gilak cupped an ear. "I don't hear nuthin'," he said.

"You're deaf, old man," said Ja.

"I can hear as good as the next feller, as the feller said," remonstrated Ah-gilak.

"Then you can hear the surf that I hear," said Ja.

"Surf?" screamed Ah-gilak. "Where?"

How far?"

"There," said Ja, pointing. "And close."

The Lo-har was fogbound. She had been cruising northeast after a futile search in the other direction. Hodon was loath to give up and admit that O-aa was hopelessly lost to him. Dian the Beautiful was apathetic. She knew that David might have been borne almost anywhere by the balloon that had carried him in search of her, and that she stood as good a chance of finding him while searching for O-aa as in any other way. But she was resigned to the fact that she would never see him again; so she encouraged Hodon to search for his O-aa.

Raj and the other Mezops were content just to sail. They loved the sea. Gamba, the Xexot, who had been a king, did not love the sea. It frightened him, but then Gamba was afraid of many things. He was not of the stuff of which kings are supposed to be made. And he was always whining and finding fault. Hodon would long since have pitched him overboard had not Dian interceded in his behalf.

"How many more sleeps before we reach your country?" he asked Dian.

"Many," she replied.

"I have already lost count of the number of times I have slept since I came aboard this thing you call a ship. We should be close to your country by now. The world is not so large that one can travel for so many sleeps without seeing it all."

"Pellucidar is very large," said Dian. "You might travel many thousands of sleeps and yet see but little of it. Furthermore, we have not been traveling toward Sari."

"What?" shrieked Gamba. "Not travelling toward your country?"

"Hodon has been searching for his mate."

"He did not find her," said Gamba, "so I suppose that we are not travelling toward Sari."

"No," said Dian. "We are getting farther and farther from Sari, at least by water."

"Make him turn around, and sail toward Sari," demanded Gamba. "I, Gamba the King do not like the ocean nor the ship."

Dian smiled. "King of what?" she asked.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I shall probably be king of Sari when we get there," said Gamba.

"Well, take my advice and don't tell Ghak the Hairy One," said Dian.

"Why not? Who is this Ghak the Hairy One?"

"He is king of Sari," explained Dian, "and he is a very large person and very fierce when he is crossed."

"I am not afraid of him," said Gamba.

Again Dian smiled.

O-AA DID NOT SCREAM as the great jaws of the reptile opened wide to seize her, nor did she faint. Had our foremothers of the stone age wasted time screaming and fainting, when danger threatened, the human race would have died a-borning. And perhaps the world would have been a better, kinder place to live for all the other animals who do not constantly make war upon one another as do men.

Like a human fly, O-aa scrambled up the face of the cliff a few feet; then she looked back and made a face at Tylosaurus, after which she considered carefully her new position. Because of the fog, she could see but a few yards in any direction. How high the cliff she could not know, The greenery which covered it consisted of lichen and stout liana-like vines which depended from above. As there was no earth on this vertical rock in which plant life might take root, it was obvious to O-aa that the lianas were rooted in earth at the top of the cliff. She examined them carefully. Not only were they, in themselves, tough and sturdy; but the aerial tendrils with which the vines clung to the face of the cliff added still greater strength and permanency. Making use of this natural ladder, O-aa ascended.

Some fifty feet above the surface of the sea she came to the mouth of a large cave from which emanated a foul stench-the stink of putrid carrion-and as she drew herself up and peered over the sill of the opening, three hissing, screaming little horrors rushed forward to attack her. Oaa recognized them as the young of the thipdar. Paleontologists would have classified them as pterodactyls of the Lias, but they would have been surprised at the enormous size to which these flying reptiles grow in the Inner World. A wing span of twenty feet is only average. They are one of the most dreaded of Pellucidar's many voracious carnivores.

The three that attacked O-aa were about the size of turkeys, and they came for her with distended jaws. Clinging to her support with one hand, O-aa whipped out her knife, and beheaded the leader of the attack. But the others came on, their little brains, reacting only to the urge of hunger, had no room for fear.

The girl would gladly have retreated, but the insensate little terrors gave her no respite. Squawking and hissing, they hurled themselves upon her. She struck a terrific blow at one of them, and missed. The momentum of the blow carried her blade against the vine to which she clung, severing it just above her left hand; and O-aa toppled backward.

Fifty feet below her lay the ocean and, perhaps, Tylosaurus and Death. We, whose reactions have been slowed down by, generations of civilization and soft, protected living, would doubtless have fallen to the ocean and, perhaps, Tylosaurus and Death. But not O-aa. Simultaneously, she transferred the knife to her mouth, dropped the severed

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

vine and grabbed for new support with both hands. She found it and held. "Whe-e-oo!" breathed O-aa.

It had been a close call. She started up again, but this time she detoured around the cave of the thipdars. She had much to be thankful for, including the fog. No adult thipdar had been in the cave, nor need she fear the return of one as long as the fog held.

A hundred feet above the sea she found the summit of the vertical cliff. From here, the mountain sloped upward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Easy going for O-aa this. Practically level ground. There were trees. They kept looming up out of the fog as she advanced. Trees are beloved of Pellucidarians. Beneath their branches, sanctuary from the great earth bound carnivores.

Now that she had found trees, O-aa had no further need of fog. She wished that it would lift. She was getting as sick of the fog as she had been of the sea. But she knew that the fog was better than the sea. It would go away some time. The sea, never.

She climbed upward, alert, listening, sniffing the air. And presently she emerged from the fog into the bright sunlight of Pellucidar's eternal noon. The scene was beautiful, And if you think that primitive peoples do not appreciate beauty you are crazy. In any event, O-aa did. The mountain continued to rise gently toward its peak. Splendid trees dotted its slope. Green grass grew lush, starred with many flowers; and below her, shining bright in the sun, the fog rolled, a silent, silver sea.

By the time she reached the summit, the fog had disappeared as miraculously as it had come. O-aa looked in all directions, and her heart sank. In all directions she saw water. This single mountain rose from the depths of the ocean to form a small island. A mile away, she could see the mainland. But that mile of water seemed to the little cave girl of the mountains as effectual a barrier to escape as would a hundred miles of turbulent sea.

And then O-aa saw something else-something that sent her heart into a real nose dive. Sneaking toward her was a jalok, the fierce dog of Pellucidar. And there was no tree nearby.

THE JOHN TYLER went ashore and the surf pounded her against the rocks. Ahgilak burst into tears as he envisioned the breaking up of his beloved clipper ship. The he cursed fate and the fog and the calm, but especially he cursed O-aa. "Shut up, old man!" commanded Ja. He gave orders that the boats be lowered on the offshore side of the ship. The powerful Mezops manned them and held them from the ship's side with their spears as the rollers came in.

Ja and Jav and Ko checked off the men to see that all were present. "Where is the girl?" asked Ja. No one had seen her, and Ja sent men to search the ship for her. They returned to report that she was not on board, and Ja turned fierce eyes on Ahgilak.

"What did you do with her, old man?" demanded Ja.

"I did nothing to her."

"You wanted to put her ashore. I think you threw her overboard."

"We do not need him any more," said Jav. "I think we should kill him."

"No! No!" screamed Ah-gilak. "I did not throw the girl overboard. I do not know what became of her."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Do not kill me, I am just a poor old man who would not harm any one."

"We all know that you are a liar," said Ja, "so nothing you may say makes any difference. However, as no one saw you throw the girl overboard I shall give you the benefit of the doubt and not kill you. Instead, I shall leave you aboard the ship."

"But it will break up and I shall be drowned," pleaded Ah-gilak.

"That is your affair, not mine," said Ja. So the Mezops abandoned the wreck of the John Tyler, leaving Ah-gilak behind.

The Mezops reached the shore in safety and shortly after, the fog lifted. A strong wind sprang up, blowing from the land toward the sea. The Mezops saw the sails of the John Tyler fill.

"The old man is in bad way," said Jav.

"Look!" cried Ko. "The ship is moving out to sea."

"The tide came in and floated her," said Ja. "Maybe we should not have abandoned her so soon. I do not like the land."

"Perhaps we could overhaul her in the boats," suggested one.

So they manned the boats and paddled after the John Tyler. Ah-gilak saw them coming and guessed their intention. Impelled by the urges-fear of the Mezops and a desire for revenge-he took the wheel and steered a course that took full advantage of the wind; and the John Tyler picked up speed and showed a pretty pair of heels to the sweating Mezops, who soon gave up the chase and started back toward shore.

"The old son of a sithic!" exclaimed Jav.

The sithic is a toadlike reptile.

The jalok is a big, shaggy hyaenodon, with a body as large as a leopard's but with longer legs. Jaloks usually hunt in packs, and not even the largest and fiercest of animals is safe from attack. They are without fear, and they are always hungry. O-aa knew all about jaloks, and she wished that she was up a tree-literally. She certainly was, figuratively. She was also behind the eight ball, but O-aa, knew nothing of eight balls. To be behind the eight ball and up a tree at the same time is very bad business.

O-aa drew her knife and waited. The jalok lay down and cradled his powerful jaws on his outstretched front legs, and eyed O-aa. This surprised the girl. She had expected the beast to rush her. The animal looked like a big, shaggy dog; but Oaa was not deceived by appearances. She knew that sometimes jaloks were tamed, but they were never domesticated. This one was probably not hungry, and was waiting until he was.

I can't stay here forever, just waiting to be eaten, thought O-aa; so she started along slowly in the direction she had been going. The jalok got up and followed her.

Below her stretched a gentle declivity down to a narrow coastal plain. A little stream, starting from some place at her left, wound down the mountainside. It was joined by other little streams to form a little river that meandered across the plain down to the sea. It was all a scene of exquisite beauty-a little gem set in an azure sea. But for the moment it was all lost on Oaa as she glanced behind and saw the jalok following her.

If I climb a tree, thought O-aa, the jalok will lie down beneath it until I come down or fall out. O-aa knew her jaloks; so she kept on walking.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

She had descended about a half mile when she heard a savage growl ahead and to her left. As she looked, a codon broke from the cover of some tall grass, and charged her. O-aa knew that she was lost, but she held her knife in readiness and waited her end. Then something flashed by her. It was the jalok. He met the codon, a huge timber wolf, long extinct upon the outer crust, at the moment that it leaped for O-aa.

Then followed what bade fair to be a battle royal between these two savage, powerful beasts; and Oaa took advantage of their preoccupation to make good her escape. As she ran down the mountainside, the roars and growls of the battling beasts filled her ears. But not for long. Suddenly they stopped. O-aa glanced back, and again her heart sank. The jalok was coming toward her at a run. Behind him, she could see the still form of the codon lying where it had died.

O-aa stood still. The end was inevitable. She might as well face it now. The jalok stopped a few yards from her; then it moved toward her again wagging its tail! That has meant the same thing in the dog family from the Cretaceous age to the present day, on the outer crust or in the Inner World at the earth's core.

O-aa sheathed her knife and waited. The jalok came close and looked up into her face, and O-aa placed a hand upon its head and scratched it behind an ear. The great beast licked her hand, and when O-aa started down toward the sea again, it walked at her side, brushing against her. Not since she had lost Hodon had O-aa felt so safe. She tangled her fingers in the shaggy collar that ringed the jalok's neck, as though she would never let him go again.

Until this moment she had not realized how friendless and alone she had been since she had said goodbye to David and Abner Perry and Ghak. But now she had both a friend and a protector. O-aa was almost happy.

As they neared the beach, the jalok moved toward the right; and O-aa followed him. He led her to a little cove. Here she saw an outrigger canoe drawn up on the beach above high water. The jalok stopped beside it and looked up at her. In the canoe were the weapons and the loincloth of a man. And in these things, O-aa read a story. She could see by the general appearance of the articles in the canoe that they had lain untouched for some time. She knew that a man did not go naked and unarmed far from his weapons. And thus she reconstructed the story: A warrior had paddled from the mainland with his jalok to hunt, perhaps. He had gone into the sea to bathe, and had been seized and devoured by one of the innumerable voracious creatures which swarm in the waters of the Korsar Az. Or perhaps a thipdar had swooped down and seized him. At any rate, she was confident that he had gone never to return and, she had fallen heir to his weapons, his canoe, and his jalok. But there remained a mile of terrifying water between herself and the mainland!

She looked across to the farther shore just in time to see the John Tyler put to sea. She could not know that the ship bore only Ah-gilak. The others, far down the coast, were too far away for her to see them. She looked at the canoe and out again across the water. The jalok lay at her feet. She ruffled his shaggy mane with a sandalled foot, and he looked up at her and bared his fangs in a canine grin-terrible fangs set in mighty jaws that could tear her to pieces in a moment.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

O-aa sat down on the ground beside the jalok and tried to plan for the future. What she was really trying to do was raise her courage to a point that would permit her to launch the canoe and paddle across that fearsome mile. Every time it reached the sticking point she would look out and see a terrible head or a dorsal fin break the surface of the sea. Then her courage would do a nose dive. And when she realized that the wind was against her, she breathed a sigh of relief for so excellent an excuse to delay her departure.

She examined the contents of the canoe more closely. She saw a stone knife, a stone tipped spear, a tomahawk with a well shaped stone head and a wooden haft, a bow, a quiver of arrows, two paddles, a pole six or seven feet long, a woven fibre mat, and some cordage of braided grasses. These articles suggested something to O-aa that would never have entered her head before she began her adventures on that unfamiliar medium which rolled and tossed in illimitable vastness to form the Sojar Az and Korsar Az. O-aa had learned much that was no part of the education of a cave girl from Kali.

She examined further and found a hole in a thwart and beneath it a corresponding receptacle in the bottom of the canoe.

Now she knew what the pole was for and the fibre mat and the cordage. All she had to do, she decided, was wait for a favorable wind. That would be much better than paddling; and as she intended to wait for a strong wind, it would result in a much shorter passage, which would cut down the odds that were always against the survival of any who put to sea in Pellucidar.

Her doom postponed until the wind changed, Oaa realized that she was hungry. She took the spear, the quiver of arrows, and the bow and set forth to hunt. The jalok accompanied her.

AH-GILAK LAMED the wheel and went below to ascertain the damage that had resulted from the ship's pounding on the rocks. He found her sound as a roach, for the Sarians had selected their lumber well and built well.

Returning to the wheel, he took stock of his situation. It did not appear too rosy. Twenty or thirty men were required to man the John Tyler. Obviously, one little old man could not. With the wind he had now, he could hold on as long as there was ocean ahead. He might even maneuver the ship a little, for Ah-gilak had spent a lifetime under sail. But a storm would be his undoing.

Without stars or moon, with a stationary sun, he could not navigate even had he had the necessary instruments and a dependable chart, none of which he had. Nor could he have navigated the nameless strait could he have found it. Ah-gilak was in a bad way, and he knew it; so he decided to beach John Tyler at the earliest opportunity and take his chances on land.

O-aa followed the little river. She moved warily, taking advantage of cover-trees, tall grasses, underbrush. She moved silently, as silently as the great beast at her side. Her left hand grasped her bow and several arrows, another arrow was fitted to the bow and drawn part way back, presenting an analogy to a loaded .45 with a full clip in the magazine and the safety off.

Suddenly three horses broke from nearby underbrush, and in quick succession two

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

arrows brought two of them down. O-aa rushed in and finished them with her knife, while the jalok pursued and dragged down the third.

O-aa picked up the two horses she had shot and waited while the jalok devoured his kill; then they started back toward the canoe. The girl knew her prey as orthopi; but you would have recognized them as Hyracotherii of the Lower Eocene, the early ancestors of Seabiscuit and Whirlaway, little creatures about the size of foxes.

The girl gave one of the orthopi to the jalok; then she made fire and cooked much of the other for herself. Her hunger satisfied, she lay down beneath a tree and slept.

When she awoke, she looked around for the jalok; but he was nowhere to be seen. O-aa was swept by a wave of loneliness. She had been heartened by the promise of companionship and protection which the savage beast had offered. Suddenly the future looked very black. In her fit of despondency, the shore of the mainland seemed to have receded; and she peopled the world with terrifying menaces, which was wholly superfluous, as Nature had already attended to that.

She gave herself up to self-pity for only a short time; then she lifted her chin and braced her shoulders and was the self-sufficient cave girl of Kali once more. She looked out across the water, and realized that the wind had changed while she slept and was blowing strongly toward the mainland.

Going to the canoe, she stepped the mast and rigged the sail to the best of her ability, which was not mean; for O-aa was a highly intelligent young person, observant and with a retentive memory. She tugged on the canoe and found that she could move it, but before she dragged it into the sea she decided to look around once more for the jalok.

She was glad that she had, for she saw him coming down toward her carrying something on his back. When he was closer, she saw that it was the carcass of small deer which he had thrown across his shoulders, still holding to it with his jaws-carrying it as the African lion has been known to carry its prey.

He came up to her, wagging his tail, and laid his kill at her feet. O-aa was so glad to see him that she dropped to her knees and put both arms around his shaggy collar and hugged him. Doubtless, this was something new in the jalok's life; but he seemed to understand and like it, for he bared his fangs in a grin and licked the girl's face.

Now O-aa was faced with a problem. If she waited to cook some of the deer and eat, the wind might change. On the other hand she couldn't bear to abandon so much good meat. The alternative was to take it with her, but would the jalok let her take the carcass away from him? She determined to experiment. Seizing the deer, she started to drag it down toward the water's edge. The jalok watched her; then, apparently getting the idea, he took hold of it and helped her. O-aa realized what she had become almost convinced of, that here was a well trained hunting animal that had worked with and for his dead master.

Having deposited the deer on the beach, O-aa dragged the canoe down to the water. It taxed her strength, but at last she was rewarded by seeing it afloat. Then she carried the deer to it.

She had no name for the jalok, and did not know how to call him to get into the canoe. She did not need to know. As she climbed over the gunwale, he leaped aboard and took

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

his station in the bow.

The stern of the canoe was still resting on the sandy bottom, but the sail had filled and was tugging to free it. A few vigorous shoves with a paddle freed the little craft, and O-aa was on her way across the frightful water.

Steering with a paddle, O-aa kept the nose of her craft pointed at a spot on the opposite shore and the wind always directly astern. As the wind freshened, the canoe fairly raced through the water. This was much better than paddling and much faster. O-aa could imagine that this would be a delightful way to travel were it not for the innumerable horrors that infested the ocean and the terrific storms which occasionally whipped it into fury.

Constantly searching the surface of the sea for signs of danger, the girl glanced back and saw the long neck and small head of a tandoraz, which, in Pellucidarian, means mammoth of the sea. The reptile was following the canoe and gaining on it slowly. O-aa well knew what was in that tiny brain. She also knew that the best she could do with any of her weapons was to infuriate it.

Had she known a god, she would have prayed to him for more wind; but, knowing no god, she had to depend entirely on her own resources. Suddenly her eye's fell upon the deer. If she couldn't destroy the tandoraz, perhaps she might escape it if she could but delay it.

The shore was not far away now, and the canoe was racing through the water almost as fast as the reptile was swimming; although O-aa was none too sure that the creature was exerting itself anywhere near to the limit of its powers. Nor was it.

With a steel knife that David had given her she ripped open the belly of the carcass and eviscerated it. Glancing back, she saw that the tandoraz was almost upon her. The cold, reptilian eyes glared down upon her. The snake-like jaws gaped wide.

Dragging the viscera to the stern of the canoe, she dropped it overboard directly in front of the hissing creature. The next couple of seconds were an eternity. Would the thing take the bait? Would the stupid mind in its tiny brain be thus easily diverted from the fixed idea that it had been following?

The odor of fresh animal matter and blood turned the scale in O-aa's favor. The neck arched and the head struck viciously at the viscera. As the tandoraz stopped, to tear at this luscious tid-bit, the canoe drew away. The distance widened. The shore was quite close now, but there was a heavy surf pounding on a sandy beach.

O-aa had resumed the paddle and was steering once more. Her heart was filled with rejoicing. Her escape from death had been all too close, and by comparison the menace of the heavy surf seemed trivial. She looked back at the tandoraz, and her heart missed a beat. Evidently sensing that its prey was escaping, it was coming through the water at terrific speed in pursuit.

O-aa glanced forward again. She was confident that the canoe would reach the surf before the tandoraz could overhaul it. But what then? She didn't believe that the canoe could live in what seemed to her the mountainous waves that broke upon the shore and rolled far up the beach. The reptile would be upon them as they were thrown into the water. It could not get them all. She could only hope that the thing would seize the car-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

cass of the deer rather than upon her or the jalok which still sat in the bow of the canoe all unconscious of the tragedy of the past few minutes.

Again the “mammoth of the sea” loomed above her. The canoe was caught by a great roller and lifted high. O-aa felt a sudden surging rush as though the canoe, sentient of impending danger, sought to escape in a burst of speed.

Riding high now, just over the crest of the roller, the outrigger raced toward the beach like a frightened deer; and in a swirl of foamy water came to rest on the sand well out of reach of the tandoraz. O-aa leaped out and held it from being drawn out again by the receding waves, and with the next she dragged it well up to safety. Then she threw herself down on the sand, exhausted.

The jalok came and sat down beside her. She stroked its shaggy coat. “We made it,” she said. “I didn’t think we should.” The jalok said nothing. At least not in words. He put a great paw on her and licked her ear.

“I shall have to give you a name,” said O-aa. “Let me see. Ah, I have it! Rahna. That is a good name for you, Rahna.”

Rahna means killer.

O-AA SAT up and took stock of her situation. Beyond the sandy beach the ground rose slowly to a low ridge four or five hundred yards inland. Beyond the ridge were rolling hills, upcurving in this horizonless world to blend with distant mountains which, in turn, blended into the haze of distance.

The ground between O-aa and the ridge was carpeted with Bermuda grass and stunted shrubs, with here and there a windblown tree. The trees reminded O-aa that she was courting death to lie here thus in the open, an invitation to the first winged reptile that might discover her.

She arose and returned to the canoe, where she threw the carcass of the deer across one shoulder and gathered up her weapons. Then she looked down at the jalok and said, “Come, Rahna!” and walked to the nearest tree.

A man coming down out of the rolling hills paused at the edge of the low ridge which O-aa had seen a few hundred yards inland. At the man’s side was a jalok. The man was naked but for a G-string. He carried a stone tipped spear, a stone knife, a bow and arrows. When he saw the girl, he dropped to the ground, where he was hidden by low bushes. He spoke to the jalok, and it lay down beside him.

The man noted the canoe pulled up on the beach. He noted the jalok which accompanied the girl. He saw the carcass of the deer. At first he had thought the girl a man, but closer inspection revealed that he had been mistaken. He was also mystified, for he knew that here there should be no girl with a jalok and a canoe. This was the man’s country, and the men of the stone age knew all that went on in their own little neck-of-the-woods.

O-aa cut a generous hindquarter from the carcass and gave it to Rahna. She used the tomahawk and her steel knife. Then she gathered dry grasses and bits of dead wood, made fire, and cooked her own meal. O-aa, a slender little blonde, tore at the meat with firm, white teeth; and devoured enough for a couple of farm hands. Pellucidarians store up energy through food, for oftentimes they may have to go for long periods without food. Similarly, they store up rest by long sleeps.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Having stored up all the energy she could hold, Oaa lay down to store up rest. She was awakened by the growling of Rahna. He was standing beside her, his hair bristling along his spine.

O-aa saw a man approaching. A jalok paced at his side. The girl seized her bow and arrows and stood up. Both jaloks were growling now. O-aa fitted an arrow to her bow. "Go away!" she said.

"I am not going to hurt you," said the man, who had seen that O-aa was very lovely and very desirable.

"I could have told you that myself," replied the girl. "If you tried to, I could kill you. Rahna could kill you.

My mate, my father, or my seven brothers could kill you." It had occurred to Oaa that possibly thirteen brothers were too many to sound plausible.

The man grinned and sat down. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am O-aa, daughter of Oose, King of Kali. My mate is Hodon the Fleet One. My seven brothers are very large, fierce men. My three sisters are the most beautiful women in Pellucidar, and I am more beautiful than they."

The man continued to grin. "I never heard of Kali," he said. "Where is it?"

"There," said O-aa, pointing. "You must be a very ignorant person," she added, "for Kali is the largest country in the world.

It requires the caves of a whole mountain range to house her warriors who are as many as the grasses that you can see as far as you can see."

"You are very beautiful," said the man, "but you are a great liar. If you were not so beautiful, I would beat you for lying so much. Maybe I shall anyway."

"Try it," challenged O-aa. "I have not killed anyone since I last slept."

"Ah," said the man, "so that is it? You killed my brother."

"I did not kill your brother. I never saw your brother."

"Then how did you get his canoe, his jalok, and his weapons? I recognize them all."

It was then that O-aa realized that she had lied a little too much for her own health; so she decided to tell the truth. "I will tell you," she said.

"And see that you tell the truth," said the man.

"You see that mountain that sticks up out of the sea?" she asked, pointing at the island. The man nodded. "I leaped into the sea," continued O-aa, "on the other side of that mountain from a big canoe to escape an old man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas. Then I crossed to this side of the mountain where I saw Rahna."

"His name is not Rahna," said the man.

"Maybe it wasn't but it is now. And don't interrupt me any more. Rahna saved me from a codon, and we became friends. We came down to the edge of the water and found a canoe with these weapons and a man's loincloth in it. If it was your brother's canoe, I think he must have gone in the water and been eaten by a tandoraz, or possibly a thipdar flew down and got him. I did not kill your brother. How could I have killed a warrior when I was armed only with a knife? As you can see, all my other weapons are those I found in the canoe."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The man thought this over. "I believe that you are telling the truth at last," he said; "because had you killed my brother, his jalok would have killed you."

"Now will you go away and leave me alone?" demanded O-aa.

"Then what will you do?"

"I shall return to Kali."

"Do you know how far it is to Kali?"

"No. Kali is not far from the shore of the Lural Az. Do you know how far it is to the Lural Az?"

"I never heard of the Lural Az," said the man.

"You are a very ignorant person," said O-aa.

"Not as ignorant as you, if you think you can reach Kali by going in the direction you pointed. In that direction there is a range of mountains that you cannot cross."

"I can go around it," said O-aa.

"You are a very brave girl," said the man. "Let us be friends. Come with me to my village. Perhaps we can help you on your way to Kali. At least, warriors can go with you as far as the mountains, beyond which none of our people have ever gone."

"How do I know that you will not harm me?" asked O-aa.

The man threw down all his weapons and came toward her with his hands raised. Then she knew that he would not harm her. "We will be friends," she said. "What is your name?"

"I am Utan of the tribe of Zurts." He turned and spoke to his jalok, saying, "Padang."

"Tell your jalok that we are friends," he said to Oaa.

"Padang, Rahna," said O-aa. Padang is Pellucidarian for friend or friends.

The two jaloks approached one another a little stiff-legged; but when they had sniffed about each other, they relaxed and wagged their tails, for they had been raised together in the village of Zurts. But there was no playful bouncing, as there might have been between domesticated beasts dogs. These were savage wild beasts with all the majesty and dignity that is inherent in their kind. Adult wild beasts have far more dignity than man. When people say in disgust that a person acts like a beast, they really mean that he acts like a man.

"You can handle a paddle?" Utan asked O-aa.

"I have paddled all over the seas of Pellucidar," said O-aa.

"There you go again! Well, I suppose that I shall have to get used to it. Anyway, you can help me paddle my brother's canoe to a safe place."

"It is my canoe," said O-aa.

Utan grinned. "And I suppose that you are going to paddle it across the mountains to Kali?"

"I could if I wanted to," said O-aa.

"The better I know you," said Utan, "the less I doubt it. If there are other girls like you in Kali, I think I shall go with you and take one of them for my mate."

"They wouldn't have you," said O-aa. "You are too short. You can't be much more

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

than six feet tall. All our men are seven feet-except those who are eight feet."

"Come on, little liar," said Utan, "and we will get the canoe."

Together they dragged the outrigger into the water. O-aa climbed into the bow, the two jaloks leaped in, and just at the right moment Utan gave the craft a shove and jumped in himself.

"Paddle now!" he said. "And paddle hard."

The canoe rose to the crest of a roller and slid down the other side. The two paddled furiously until, they were beyond the heavy rollers; then they paralleled the shore until they came to the mouth of a small river, up which Utan turned.

It was a pretty little river overhung by trees and full of crocodiles. They paddled up it for about a mile until they came to rapids. Here, Utan turned in to the bank on their right; and together, they dragged the canoe up among the lush verdure, where it was well hidden.

"Your canoe will be quite safe here," said Utan, "until you are ready to paddle it over the mountains to Kali. Now we will go to my village."

HODON, RAJ, DIAN, AND GAMBA were standing on the quarterdeck of the Lo-har; and, as always, Hodon was searching the surface of the sea for the little speck that, in his heart of hearts, he knew he would never see-the little speck that would be the Sari in which O-aa had been carried away by winds and currents on the Sojar AZ and, doubtless, through the nameless strait into the Korsar Az. The little lateen rigged Lohar had been beset by fog and calm, but now the weather had cleared and a fair wind filled the single sail.

Hodon shook his head sadly. "I am afraid it is hopeless, Dian," he said. Dian the Beautiful nodded in acquiescence.

"My men are becoming restless," said Raj. "They have been away from home for many, many sleeps. They want to get back to their women."

"All right," said Hodon. "Turn back for Sari."

As the little ship came about, Gamba pointed. "What is that?" he asked.

They all looked. In the haze of the distance there was a white speck on the surface of the sea. "It is a sail," said Raj.

"O-aa!" exclaimed Hodon.

The wind was blowing directly from the direction in which the sail lay; so the Lohar had to tack first one way and then another. But it was soon apparent that the strange ship was sailing before the wind directly toward them, and so the distance between was constantly growing shorter.

"That is not the Sari," said Raj. "That is a big ship with more sail than I have ever seen before."

"It must be a Korsar," said Dian. "If it is, we are lost."

"We have cannon," said Hodon, "and men to fight them."

"Turn around," said Gamba, "and go the other way. Maybe they have not seen us."

"You always want to run away," said Dian, contemptuously. "We shall hold our course and fight them."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Turn around!" screamed Gamba. "It is a command! I am king!"

"Shut up!" said Raj. "Mezops do not run away."

"Nor Sarians," said Dian.

THE VILLAGE OF THE Zurts, to which Utan led Oaa, lay in a lovely valley through which a little river wandered. It was not a village of caves such as O-aa was accustomed to in Kali. The houses here were of bamboo thatched with grass, and they stood on posts some ten feet above the ground. Crude ladders led up to their doorways.

There were many of these houses; and in the doorways, or on the ground below them, were many warriors and women and children and almost as many jaloks as there were people.

As Utan and O-aa approached, the jaloks of the village froze into immobility, the hair along their backbones erect. Utan shouted, "Padang!" And when they recognized him, some of the warriors shouted, "Padang!" Then the jaloks relaxed and Utan and Oaa entered the village in safety; but there had to be much sniffing and smelling on the part of the jaloks before an entente cordiale was established.

Warriors and women gathered around Utan and Oaa, asking many questions. Oaa was a curiosity here, for she was very blonde, while the Zurts had hair of raven black. They had never seen a blonde before.

Utan told them all that he knew about O-aa, and asked Jalu the chief if she might remain in the village. "She is from a country called Kali which lies the other side of the Terrible Mountains. She is going to try to cross them, and from what I have seen of her she will cross them if any one can."

"No one can," said Jalu, "and she may remain-for thirty sleeps," he added. "If one of our warriors has taken her for a mate in the meantime, she may remain always."

"None of your warriors will take me for a mate," said O-aa, "and I will leave long before I have slept thirty times."

"What makes you think none of my warriors will take you for a mate?" demanded Jalu.

"Because I wouldn't have one of them."

Jalu laughed. "If a warrior wanted you he would not ask you, he would take you."

It was O-aa's turn to laugh. "He would get a knife in his belly," she said. "I have killed many men. Furthermore, I have a mate. If I am harmed, he would come and my eleven brothers and my father, the king; and they would kill you all. They are very fierce men. They are nine feet tall. My mate is Hodon the Fleet One. He is a Sarian.

The Sarians are very fierce people. But if you are kind to me, no harm will befall you. While I am here, Rahna and I will hunt for you. I am a wonderful hunter. I am probably the best hunter in all Pellucidar."

"I think you are probably the best liar," said Jalu. "Who is Rahna?"

"My jalok," said O-aa, laying her hand on the head of the beast standing beside her.

"Women do not hunt, nor do they have jaloks," said Jalu.

"I do," said O-aa.

A half smile curved the lip of Jalu. He found himself admiring this yellow haired

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

stranger, girl. She had courage, and that was a quality that Jalu the chief understood and admired. He had never seen so much of it in a woman before.

A warrior stepped forward. "I will take her as my mate," he said, "and teach her a woman's place. What she needs is a beating."

O-aa's lip curved in scorn. "Try it, bowlegs," she said.

The warrior flushed, for he was very bowlegged and was sensitive about it. He took another step toward O-aa, threateningly.

"Stop, Zurk!" commanded Jalu. "The girl may remain here for thirty sleeps without mating. If she stays longer, you may take her-if you can. But I think she will kill you."

Zurk stood glaring at O-aa. "When you are mine," he snarled, "the first thing I will do is beat you to death."

Jalu turned to one of the women. "Hala," he directed, "show this woman a house in which she may sleep."

"Come," said Hala to O-aa.

She took her to a house at the far end of the village. "No one lives here now," she said. "The man and the woman who lived here were killed by a tarag not long ago."

O-aa looked at the ladder and up at the doorway. "How can my jalok get up there?" she asked.

Hala looked at her in surprise. "Jaloks do not come into the houses," she explained. "They lie at the foot of the ladders to warn their owners of danger and to protect them. Did you not know this?"

"We do not have tame jaloks in my country," said O-aa.

"You are lucky that you have one here, now that you have made an enemy of Zurk. He is a bad man; not at all like Jalu, his father."

So, thought O-aa, I have made an enemy of the chief's son. She shrugged her square little shoulders.

Ah-gilak had bowled along in a southwesterly direction for some time before a good wind. Then the wind died. Ah-gilak cursed. He cursed many things, but principally he cursed O-aa, who had brought all his misfortunes upon him, according to his superstition.

When the wind sprang up again, it blew in the opposite direction from that in which it had been blowing before the calm. Ahgilak danced up and down in rage. But he could do nothing about it. He could sail in only one way, and that was with the wind. So he sailed back in a north-easterly direction. He lashed the wheel and went below to eat and sleep.

AS THE LO-HAR and John Tyler approached one another, the former made no effort to avoid the larger ship. Her guns were loaded and manned, and she was prepared to fight.

It was Raj who first noticed something peculiar about the strange ship. "There is no one on deck," he said. "There is no one at the wheel. She is a fine ship," he added half to himself. Then an idea popped into his head. "Let's capture her," he said.

"No! No!" cried Gamba. "They haven't seen us. Sail away as fast as, you can."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Can you bring the Lo-har alongside her?" asked Dian.

"Yes," said Jav. He summoned his men from below and gave them their orders.

The Lo-har came about ahead of the John Tyler which was making far better headway than the smaller vessel. As the John Tyler overhauled her, Jav drew in closer to the other ship. As their sides touched, the agile Mezops swarmed aboard the John Tyler with lines and made the Lo-har fast to her.

The impact of the two ships as they came together awoke Ah-gilak. "Dod-burn it! what now?" he cried, as he scrambled up the ladder to the main deck. "Tarnation!" he exclaimed as he saw the score of Mezops facing him. "I've gone plumb looney after all." He shut his eyes and turned his head away. Then he peeked from a corner of one eye. The copper colored men were still there.

"It's the little Ah-gilak," said one of the Mezops. "He eats people."

Now Ah-gilak saw more people coming over the side of his ship, and saw the sail of the little Lo-har. He saw Raj and Hodon, and a beautiful girl whom he had never seen before. With them was a yellow man. But now Ah-gilak realized what had happened and the great good luck that had overtaken him at the very moment when there seemed not a ray of hope in all the future.

"Gad and Gabriell!" he exclaimed. "It never rains but they's a silver lining, as the feller said. Now I got a crew. Now we can get the hell out o' this here Korsar Az an' back to Sari."

"Who else is aboard?" asked Hodon.

"Not a livin' soul but me." He thought quickly and decided that perhaps he had better not tell all the truth. "You see we had a little bad luck-run ashore in a storm. When the crew abandoned ship, I guess they plumb forgot me; and before I could get ashore, the wind changed and the tide came in an', by all tarnation, the first thing I knew I was a-sailed off all by myself."

"Who else was aboard?" insisted Hodon.

"Well, they was Ja, and Jav, and Ko, an' a bunch of other Mezops. They was the ones that abandoned ship. But before that O-aa got a yen to go ashore--"

"O-aa?" cried Hodon. "She was aboard this ship?"

Where is she?"

"I was just a'tellin you. She got a yen to go ashore, and jumped overboard."

"Jumped overboard?" Hodon's voice rang with incredulity. "I think you are lying, old man," he said.

"Cross my heart, hope to die," said Ahgilak.

"How did she get aboard this ship?"

continued Hodon.

"Why, we picked her up out of a canoe in the nameless strait; and she told us where David was, an' we went back an' rescued him."

"David?" exclaimed Dian. "Where is he?"

"Well, before the John Tyler went ashore, David an' Abner Perry an' Ghak an' all his Sarian warriors decided they could get back to Sari quicker across country than they

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

could by sailin' back. Course they was plumb looney, but--"

"Where did they go ashore?" asked Dian.

"Gad an' Gabriel! How'd I know? They ain't no charts, they ain't no moon, they ain't no stars, and the dang sun don't never move; so they ain't no time. They might o' went ashore twenty years ago, for all a body can tell."

"Would you recognize the coast where they landed?" persisted Dian.

"I might an' I might not. Reckon as how I could though."

"Could you recognize the spot where Oaa jumped overboard?" asked Hodon.

"Reckon not. Never seed it. She jumped over in a fog."

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Well, now maybe." Ah-gilak being certain that Oaa had drowned or been eaten by one of the reptiles that swarm the Korsar Az, felt that it would be safe to give what information he could. "As a matter of fact," he continued, "'t warn't far from where the John Tyler went ashore."

"And you would recognize that spot?"

"I might an' I might not. If I recalls correctly they was an island 'bout a mile off shore near where the John Tyler hit."

"Well, let's get going," said Hodon.

"Where?" demanded Ah-gilak.

"Back along the coast to where O-aa 'Jumped overboard' and to where David Innes went ashore."

"Now wait, young feller," remonstrated Ah-gilak. "Don't you go forgettin' that I'm skipper o' this ship. It's me as'll give orders aboard this hooker."

Hodon turned to Raj. "Have your men bring all the water, provisions, ammunition, and personal belongings from the Lohar; then set her adrift."

Ah-gilak pointed a finger at Hodon. "Hold on young feller--"

"Shut up!" snapped Hodon, and then to Raj. "You will captain the John Tyler, Raj."

"Gad and Gabriel!" screamed Ah-gilak. "I designed her, I named her, an' I been skipper of her ever since she was launched. You can't do this to me."

"I can, I have, and I'll do more if you give me any trouble," said Hodon. "I'll throw you overboard, you old scoundrel."

Ah-gilak subsided and went away and sulked. He knew that Hodon's was no idle threat. These men of the Stone Age held life lightly. He set his mind to the task of evolving a plan by which he could be revenged without incriminating himself. Ahgilak had a shrewd Yankee mind unfettered by any moral principles or conscience.

He leaned against the rail and glared at Hodon. Then his eyes wandered to Dian, and he glared at her. Another woman! Bad luck! And with this thought the beginnings of a plan commenced to take shape. It was not a wholly satisfactory and devastating plan, but it was better than nothing. And presently he was aided by a contingency which Hodon had not considered.

With the useful cargo of the Lo-har transferred to the John Tyler and the former set

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

adrift, Raj came to Hodon, a worried expression on his fine face.

"This," he said, with a wave of a hand which embraced the John Tyler, "is such a ship as I and my men have never seen before. She is a mass of sails and ropes and spars, all unfamiliar to us. We cannot sail her."

For a moment Hodon was stunned. Being a landsman, such a possibility had never occurred to him. He looked astern at the little Lo-har, from which the larger ship was rapidly drawing away. Hodon realized that he had been a trifle precipitate. While there was yet time, perhaps it would be well to lower the boats and return to the Lo-har. The idea was mortifying.

Then Raj made a suggestion. "The old man could teach us," he said. "If he will," he added with a note of doubt in his voice.

"He will," snapped Hodon, and strode over to Ahgilak. Raj accompanied him.

"Ah-gilak," he said to the old man, "you will sail the ship, but Raj will still be captain. You will teach him and his men all that is necessary."

"So you are not going to throw me overboard?" said Ahgilak with a sneer.

"Not yet," said Hodon, "but if you do not do as I have said and do it well, I will."

"You got your nerve, young feller, askin' me, a Yankee skipper to serve as sailin' master under this here gol-durned red Indian."

Neither Hodon nor Raj had the slightest idea what a red Indian was, but from Ahgilak's tone of voice they were both sure that the copper colored Mezop had been insulted.

"I'll sail her fer ye," continued Ahgilak, "but as skipper."

"Come!" said Hodon to Raj. "We will throw him overboard."

As the two men seized him, Ahgilak commenced to scream. "Don't do it," he cried. "I'll navigate her under Raj. I was only foolin'. Can't you take a joke?"

So the work of training Raj and his Mezops commenced at once. They were quick to learn, and Ahgilak did a good job of training them; because his vanity made it a pleasure to show off his superior knowledge. But he still nursed his plan for revenge. His idea was to cause dissension, turning the copper colored Mezops against the white Hodon and Dian. Of course Ahgilak had never heard of Communists, but he was nonetheless familiar with one of their techniques. As he worked with the Mezops, he sought to work on what he considered their ignorance and superstition to implant the idea that a woman on shipboard would be certain to bring bad luck and that Dian was only there because of Hodon. He also suggested to them that the latter felt superior to the Mezops because of his color, that he looked down on them as inferior, and that it was not right that he should give orders to Raj. He nursed the idea that it would be well for them all should Dian and Hodon accidentally fall overboard.

The Mezops were neither ignorant nor superstitious, nor had they ever heard of race consciousness or racial discrimination. They listened, but they were not impressed. They were only bored. Finally, one of them said to Ahgilak, "Old man, you talk too much about matters which have nothing to do with sailing this ship. We will not throw Hodon the Fleet One overboard, neither will we throw Dian the Beautiful overboard. If we throw anyone overboard it will be you."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Ah-gilak subsided.

AFTER O-AA HAD SLEPT, she came to the doorway of her house and looked around. The village seemed very quiet. There were only a few people in sight and they were at the far end of the village. She descended the ladder. Rahna, who had been lying at the foot of it, stood up and wagged his tail. O-aa scratched him between his ears.

"I am hungry," she said; "so you must be, too. We will hunt."

She had brought her weapons. Those of the Stone Age who would survive have their weapons always at hand.

"Come, Rahna!" she said, and started up the valley away from the village.

A man, standing in the doorway of a hut farther down the village street, saw them leave. It was Zurk, the son of Jalu the chief. When a turn in the little valley hid them from his sight, he started after them with his jalok. He was a heavy barreled man, short on his bowed legs; and he lurched from side to side a little as though one leg were shorter than the other. His face was coarse and brutal, with beetling brows overhanging close-set eyes.

O-aa and Rahna moved silently up the valley, searching for game. There was a high wind blowing from the direction of the sea, and presently the sun was obscured by black clouds. There was a flash of lightning followed by the deep roar of thunder. The wind rose to violence and rain commenced to fall. But none of these things appeased O-aa's hunger; so she continued to hunt.

The valley turned suddenly to the right, paralleling the coast; and it became narrower. Its walls were neither high nor steep at this point; so O-aa ascended the right hand wall and came out upon a tree dotted mesa. Here there were tall grasses in which the smaller game might hide.

And Zurk followed with his jalok. O-aa's spoor in the light mud of the new fallen rain was easy to follow. When Zurk came out upon the mesa, O-aa, who had been advancing slowly, was not far ahead. So intent was she on her search for game that Zurk closed rapidly on her without attracting her attention or that of Rahna. The wind and the rain and the rumbling thunder were all on the side of Zurk.

Zurk's plan was made. He would shoot the girl's jalok; then she would be at his mercy. He closed up the distance between them to make sure that he would not miss. He fitted an arrow to his bow. He made no sound, but something made O-aa look behind her at that very moment.

Her own bow was ready for the kill, for any game that she or Rahna might flush. Recognizing Zurk, seeing his bow drawn, she wheeled and loosed an arrow. Zurk's bow string twanged simultaneously with hers, but the arrow was aimed at O-aa and not at Rahna.

Zurk missed, but O-aa's arrow drove through the man's shoulder. Then O-aa turned and fled. Zurk knew that on his short bowed legs he could not overtake her. He spoke sharply to his jalok and pointed at the fleeing girl. "Rah!" he snapped. Rah means kill.

The powerful, savage brute bounded in pursuit.

THE SEAS FLED BEFORE the wind, mounting as the wind mounted. The John Tyler carried but a rag of sail. She handled well, she was seaworthy. Ah-gilak was proud of

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

her. Even when the storm reached almost tornado proportions he did not fear for her.

Gamba the king, cowering below, was terrified, reduced almost to gibbering idiocy by fear. Dian watched him with disgust. And this thing had dared to speak to her of love! Hodon was nervous below deck. Like all mountain men, he wanted to be out in the open. He wanted to face the storm and the danger where he could see them. Below, he was like a caged beast. The ship was pitching wildly, but Hodon managed to fight his way to a ladder and then to the deck above.

Both the wind and the current had combined with malevolent fury in an attempt to hurl the John Tyler on, the all too near shore. Dead ahead loomed the green island upon which O-aa had been cast when she leaped overboard in the fog. Ah-gilak realized that he could make no offing there, that he would have to pass between the island and the shore, only a bare mile away. And through uncharted waters, below the tumbling surface of which might he reefs and rocks. Ah-gilak was not happy.

Hodon saw the mountainous waves and wondered that any ship could live in such a sea. Being a landsman, he saw the high seas as the only menace. Ah-gilak feared for the things he could not see-the reefs and the rocks and the current that he and the ship fought. It was a titanic battle.

Hodon, clinging to a stanchion to keep from falling, was quite unconscious of a real danger that confronted him on the deck of the John Tyler. The ship rose to meet the great seas and then drove deep into the troughs, but so far she had shipped but little green water.

Ah-gilak saw the man, and his toothless mouth grimaced. The wind and the blinding rain beat about him. The tornado whipped his long white beard. There won't be no call to throw the dod-burned idjit overboard, he thought. Raj saw Hodon and called a warning to him, but the wind drove his voice down his throat.

Just before the ship reached the shelter of the island's lee, a monstrous sea loomed above her. It broke, tons of it, over her, submerging her. The John Tyler staggered to the terrific impact, then slowly she rose, shaking the water from her.

Ah-gilak looked and grinned. Hodon was no longer by the stanchion. In the shelter of the island, Ah-gilak hove to and dropped anchor. The John Tyler had weathered the storm and was safe.

Raj's eyes searched the tumbling waters, but they were rewarded by no sight of Hodon. The Mezop shook his head sadly.

He had liked the Sarian. Later, when Dian came on deck, he told her; and she, too, was sad. But death comes quickly and often in the Stone Age.

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Dian. "They are both gone now, and neither is left to grieve." She was thinking of how often she had wished for death when she had thought David was dead.

Ah-gilak shed crocodile tears, but he did not fool the Mezops. Had they not known that it would have been impossible, they would have thought that he had been instrumental in throwing Hodon overboard; and Ah-gilak would have gone over, too.

A great comber threw Hodon far up the beach, and left him exhausted and half dead. The enormous sea had buffeted him. His head had been beneath the surface more often

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

than it had been above. But the tide and the wind and the current had been with him. As had a kindly Providence, for no terrible creature of the deep had seized him. Perhaps the very turbulence of the water had saved him, keeping the great reptiles down in the relative quiet far below the surface.

Hodon lay for a long time where the sea had spewed him. Occasionally a wave would roll up and surge around him, but none had the depth or volume to drag him back into the sea.

At last he got slowly to his feet. He looked back and saw the John Tyler riding at anchor behind the island. Because of the torrential rain he could but barely discern her; so he knew that those on board could not see him at all. He thought of building a fire in the hope that its smoke might carry a message to them, but there was nothing with which to make fire.

Before the storm struck them, Ah-gilak had said that he thought the ship was approaching the spot at which the Mezops had abandoned her. If that were the case, then the island was close to the place at which O-aa was supposed to have leaped overboard. If she had survived which he doubted, she would be making her way right now toward Kali, hundreds of miles away. Perhaps, somewhere in this unknown land of terrors, she was even now pursuing her hopeless journey.

That he might ever find her in all this vast expanse of plain and hill and mountain he knew to be wholly unlikely, even were she there. But there was the chance. And there was his great love for her. Without a backward glance, Hodon the Fleet One turned his face and his steps northeast toward Kali.

O-AA RAN LIKE the wind. She did not know that Zurk had set his jalok on her. She thought only of escaping the man, and she knew that on his bowed legs he could never overtake her.

Zurk pulled upon the arrow embedded in his shoulder. It had just missed his heart. The rough stone tip tore at the tender wound. Blood ran down the man's body. His features were contorted with pain. He swore. He was very careful as he withdrew the shaft lest the point should be deflected and touch his heart. The girl and the jalok were out of sight, having passed through bushes into a slight depression.

Rahna had followed his mistress, loping easily along a few yards behind her. Suddenly another jalok flashed past him, straight for the fleeing girl.

HODON THE FLEET ONE turned his face and his steps northeast toward Kali. Hodon knew nothing about the points of the compass, but his homing instinct told him the direction to Sari; and, knowing where Kali lay in relation, to Sari, his homeland, he knew the direction he must take.

He had been walking for some time, when, emerging from a clump of bushes, he came upon a man sitting with his back against the bole of a tree. Hodon was armed only with a knife, which was not well in a world where the usual greeting between strangers is, "I kill."

He was very close to the man before he saw him, and in the instant that he saw him, he saw that his body was smeared with blood and a little stream of blood ran down his chest from a wound in his breast close to his left shoulder.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Now the Sarians, because of the influence of David Innes and Abner Perry, are less savage and brutal than the majority of Pellucidarians. Although Perry had taught them how to slaughter their fellow men scientifically with muskets, cannon, and gunpowder, he had also preached to them the doctrine of the brotherhood of man; so that their policy now was based on the admonition of a man they had never heard of who had lived in a world they would never see, to "speak softly and carry a big stick," for Abner Perry had been a worshipper of Teddy Roosevelt.

The man's head was bowed, his chin lay upon his breast. He was barely breathing.

But when he realized that some one had approached him he looked up and snarled. He expected to be killed, but he could do nothing about it.

Hodon turned back to the bushes through which he had just passed and gathered some leaves. He made a little ball of the most tender of them and came back to the man. He knelt beside him and plugged the hole in his chest with a little ball of leaves, stopping the flow of blood.

There was questioning in Zurk's dull eyes as he looked into those of the stranger. "Aren't you going to kill me?" he whispered.

Hodon ignored the question. "Where is your village?" he asked. "Is it far?"

"Not far," said Zurk.

"I will help you back to it," said Hodon, "if you promise me that the warriors will not kill me."

"They will not kill you," said Zurk. "I am the chief's son. But why do you do this for a stranger?"

"Because I am a Sarian," said Hodon proudly.

Hodon helped Zurk to his feet, but the man, could scarcely stand. Hodon realized that he could not walk; so he carried him pickaback, Zurk directing him toward the village.

The wind blew and rain fell, but the storm was abating as Hodon carried the chief's son into the village. Warriors came from their houses, with ready weapons, for Hodon was a stranger to be killed on sight. Then they saw Zurk, who was unconscious now, and hesitated.

Hodon faced them. "Instead of standing there scowling at me," he said, "come and take your chief's son and carry him to his house where the women can care for him."

When they had lifted Zurk from his back, Hodon saw that the man was unconscious and that he might be killed after all. "Where is the chief?" he asked.

Jalu was coming toward them from his house. "I am the chief," he said. "You are either a very brave man or a fool to have wounded my son and then brought him to me."

"I did not wound him," said Hodon. "I found him wounded and brought him here, else he would have died. He told me that if I did this the warriors would not kill me."

"If you have spoken the truth the warriors will not kill you," said Jalu.

"If the man dies before he regains consciousness, how will you know that I have spoken the truth?" asked Hodon.

"We will not know," said Jalu. He turned to one of his warriors. "Have him treated

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

well, but see that he does not escape.”

“The brotherhood of man is all right,” said Hodon, “if the other fellow knows about it.” They did not know what he was talking about. “I was a fool not to let him die,” he added.

“I think you were,” agreed Jalu.

Hodon was taken to a house and a woman was sent to take him food. Two warriors stood guard at the foot of the ladder. The woman came with food. It was Hala. She looked at the handsome prisoner with questioning eyes. He did not look stupid, but then one could not always tell just by looks.

“Why did you bring Zurk back when you know that you might be killed? What was he to you?” she asked.

“He was a fellow man, and I am a

Sarian,” was Hodon’s simple explanation. “You, a Sarian?” demanded Hala. “Yes. Why?” “There is a Sarian with us, or there was.

She went away, I think to hunt; and she has not returned.” Hodon paled. “What was her name?” he asked.

“Oh, I was wrong,” said Hala. “She is not a Sarian. It is her mate that is a Sarian. She comes from another country where the men are nine feet tall. She has eleven brothers and her father is a king.”

“And her name is O-aa,” said Hodon. “How do you know?” demanded Hala. “There is only one O-aa,” said Hodon,

enigmatically. “Which way did she go?” “Up the valley,” said Hala. “Zurk followed her. Zurk is a bad man. It must have

been O-aa who wounded him.”

“And I have saved him!” exclaimed Hodon. “Hereafter I shall leave the brotherhood of man to others.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It is meaningless,” said Hodon. “I must get out of here and follow her.”

“You cannot get out,” said Hala. Suddenly her eyes went wide in understanding. “You are Hodon the Fleet One,” she said.

“How did you know that?”

“That is the name of O-aa’s mate. She said so, and that he is a Sarian.”

“I must get out,” said Hodon.

“I would help you if I could,” said Hala. “I liked Oaa and I like you, but you will only get out of this village alive if Zurk regains consciousness and says that he promised that you would not be killed.”

“Will you go then and find out if he has regained consciousness?” he asked her.

O-AA HEARD A SAVAGE growl close behind her. She turned to see a strange jalok reared on its hind feet to seize her and drag her down. As she leaped, quick as a cham-ouis, to one side, she saw something else. She saw Rahna spring upon the strange jalok and hurl it to the ground. The fight that ensued was bloody and terrifying. The two sav-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

age beasts fought almost in silence. There were only snarls of rage. As they tore at one another, O-aa circled them, spear in hand, seeking an opportunity to impale Rahna's antagonist. But they moved so quickly that she dared not thrust for fear of wounding Rahna instead of the other.

Rahna needed no help. At last he got the hold for which he had been fighting—a full hold of the other jalok's throat. The mighty jaws closed, and Rahna shook the other as a terrier shakes a rat. It was soon over. Rahna dropped the carcass and looked up into O-aa's eyes. He wagged his tail, and O-aa went down on her knees and hugged him, all bloody as he was.

She found the leaves she needed, and a little stream, and there she washed Rahna's wounds and rubbed the juices of the leaves into them. After that, she flushed a couple of hares and some strange birds that have not been on earth for a million years. She fed Rahna and she ate her own meat raw, for there was nothing dry with which to make fire.

She did not dare go back to the village, both because she feared that she might have killed Zurk and feared that she hadn't.

In one event, Jalu would kill her if her deed were discovered; in the other, Zurk would kill her. She would go on toward Kali, but first she would sleep. Beneath a great tree she lay down, and the fierce hyaenodon lay down beside her.

THE GREAT STORM passed on. Again the sun shone. The seas subsided. Saddened, Dian suggested that they turn back toward Sari. "What is the use of going on?" she demanded. "They are all dead."

"Perhaps not," said Raj. "Perhaps not all. David, Abner, Ghak, and over two hundred warriors can make their way anywhere in Pellucidar. They may be waiting for us in Sari when we return."

"Then let's return as soon as possible," said Dian.

"And even for O-aa and Hodon there may be hope."

Dian shook her head. "Had they been together, possibly; but alone, no. And then, even if Hodon reached shore, he was armed with only a knife."

So they weighed anchor, put about, and laid a course for the nameless strait.

AT THE SAME TIME, David, Perry, and Ghak, were holding a council of war, so to speak. There was no war except with the terrain. With the two hundred fierce Sarians, armed with muskets and well supplied with ammunition, the party had moved through the savage world with not a single casualty.

They lived off a country rich in game, fruits, vegetables, berries, nuts. But the terrain had almost beaten them. The backbone of the great peninsula they were attempting to cross is a mountain range as formidable as the Himalayas and practically insurmountable for men clothed only in G-strings. Its upper reaches ice-locked and snowbound presented an insurmountable barrier to these almost naked men of the Stone Age.

When they reached the mountains, they had moved in a northerly direction searching for a pass. Many sleeps had passed, but still the unbroken facade of the Terrible Mountains barred the way to Sari. Time and again they had followed deep canyons, hoping that here at last was a gap through which they could pass. And time and again they had had to retrace their steps. Now, as far as the eye could reach until vision was lost in

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the haze, the Terrible Mountains stretched on seemingly into infinity.

"There is no use going on in this direction," said David Innes.

"Well, where in the world shall we go?" demanded Abner Perry.

"Back," said David. "There are no mountains on the Lidi Plains nor in the Land of Awful Shadow. We can cross there to the east coast and follow it up to Sari."

So they turned back toward the southwest, and started anew the long, long trek for home.

Later, many sleeps later, the three man point, which David always kept well ahead of his main body, sighted warriors approaching. One of the warriors of the point ran back to notify David, and presently the Sarians advanced in a long thin skirmish line. Their orders were not to fire until fired upon, and then to fire one volley over the heads of the enemy. David had found that this was usually enough. At the roar and the smoke, the enemy ordinarily fled.

To David's astonishment, the strange warriors also formed a line of skirmishers. This was a tactful innovation, brought to Pellucidar by David. He had thought that; only warriors trained under the system of the Army of the Empire used it. The two lines moved slowly toward another.

"They look like Mezops," said David to Ghak. "They are copper colored."

"How could there be Mezops here?" demanded Ghak

David shrugged. "I do not know."

Suddenly the advancing line of copper colored warriors halted. All but one. He advanced, making the sign of peace. And presently David recognized him.

"First I saw the muskets," said Ja, "and then I recognized you."

Ja told of the loss of O-aa and the abandonment of the John Tyler and how it had sailed out to sea with only Ah-gilak.

"So they are both lost," said David sadly.

"Ah-gilak is no loss," said Ja; "but the girl-yes."

And so Ja and Kay and Ko and the other Mezops joined the Sarians, and the march was resumed toward the Lidi Plains and the Land of the Awful Shadow.

A WARRIOR CAME TO the foot of the ladder leading to the house where Hodon was confined. He spoke to the guards, and one of them called to Hodon. "Sarian, come down. Jalu has sent for you."

Jalu sat on a stool in front of the house where Zurk lay. He was scowling, and Hodon thought that Zurk had died. "Zurk has spoken," said Jalu. "He said that you had told the truth. He said more. It was Oaa who loosed the arrow that wounded him. Zurk said that she was right to do it. He had followed her to kill her. Now he is sorry. I will send warriors with you to search for her. If you find her, or if you do not, the warriors will either bring you back here or accompany you to the foot of the Terrible Mountains, which is where Oaa wished to go. I do this because of what you did for Zurk when you might have killed him. Zurk has asked me to do this. When do you wish to start?"

"Now," said Hodon.

With twenty warriors and their jaloks, he set out in search of O-aa.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

O-AA SLEPT FOR A long time or for but a second. Who may know in the timeless world of Pellucidar? But it must have been for some considerable outer crust time; because things happened while she slept that could not have happened in a second.

She was awakened by Rahna's growls. She awoke quickly and completely, in full possession of all her faculties. When one is thus awakened in a Stone Age world, one does not lie with closed eyes and stretch luxuriously and then cuddle down for an extra cat nap. One snaps out of sleep and lays hold of one's weapons.

Thus, did O-aa; and looked quickly around. Rahna was standing with his back toward her, all the hairs along his spine standing on end. Beyond him, creeping toward them, was a tarag, the huge tiger of the Inner World. A jalok is no match for a tarag; but Rahna stood his ground, ready to die in protection of his mistress.

O-aa took in the scene instantly and all its implications. There was but one course to pursue were she to save both Rahna and herself. She pursued it. She swarmed up the tree beneath which she had been sleeping, taking her bow and arrows with her.

"Rahna!" she called, and the jalok looked up and saw her. Then the tarag charged. Freed from the necessity of sacrificing his life to save the girl's, Rahna bounded out of harm's way. The tarag pursued him, but Rahna was too quick for him.

Thus thwarted, the savage beast screamed in rage; then he leaped upward and tried to scramble into the tree after Oaa; but the limb he seized was too small to support his great weight, and he fell to the ground upon his back. Rahna rushed in and bit him, and then leaped away. Once more the great cat sprang after the jalok, but Rahna could run much faster. O-aa laughed and described the tarag and its ancestors with such scurrilous, vituperation as she could command and in a loud tone of voice.

The tarag is probably not noted for its patience; but this tarag was very hungry, and when one is hungry one will exercise a little patience to obtain food. The tarag came and lay down under the tree. It glared up at O-aa. It should have been watching Rahna. The jalok crept stealthily behind it; then rushed in and bit it savagely, in the rear, bounding away again instantly. Again the futile pursuit.

And again it came and lay down beneath the tree, but this time it kept its eyes on Rahna. O-aa fitted an arrow to her bow and drove it into the tarag's back. With a scream of pain and rage, the cat leaped into the air. But it would take more than one puny arrow to do more than infuriate it.

Another arrow. This time the tarag saw from whence it came, and very slowly and methodically it began to climb the bole of the tree. O-aa retreated into the higher branches. Rahna ran in and tore at the tarag's rump, but the beast continued its upward climb.

O-aa no longer felt like laughing. She guessed what the end would be. The mighty cat would climb after her until their combined weight snapped the tapering stem and carried them both to the ground.

It was upon this scene that Hodon and Utan and the other warriors broke. Utan recognized Rahna and knew that O-aa must be in the tree. Rahna turned on this new menace, and Utan shouted to O-aa to call him off. He did not want to have to kill the courageous animal.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

With relief, O-aa heard the voices of men. Any man would have been welcome at that moment, and she shouted the single word, "Padang" to Rahna. Jalu had armed Hodon, and now twenty-one bow strings twanged and twenty-one arrows pierced the body of the tarag. But even these did not kill him. They did bring him down out of the tree and set him upon these enemies.

The men scattered, but they kept pouring arrows into the beast, and each time he charged one of them, jaloks leaped in and tore at him. But at last he died. An arrow reached his savage heart.

O-aa came down from the tree. She just stood and looked at Hodon in wide eyed silence. Then two tears ran down her cheeks, and in front of all the warriors Hodon the Fleet One took her in his arms.

JALU'S TWENTY warriors accompanied O-aa and Hodon, to the Terrible Mountains. "You can never cross them," said Utan. "You had better come back and join our tribe. Jalu said that he would accept you."

Hodon shook his head. "We belong in Sari, my mate and I. We may never reach Sari, but we must try."

"We will reach Sari," said O-aa. "You and I and Rahna can go anywhere. There is nothing we Sarians cannot do."

"I thought that you were from Kali where the men are nine feet tall," said Utan.

"I am from where my mate is from," said O-aa. "I am a Sarian."

"If I thought that there was another girl like you in Kali, I would go there," said Utan.

"There is no other girl like O-aa in all Pellucidar," said Hodon the Fleet One.

"I believe you," said Utan.

Jalu's warriors ate and slept, and then they started back for their village; and Hodon and O-aa took the long trail in the wrong direction. They moved toward the northeast. But after all it proved to be the right direction, for before they had slept again they met David and his party. For all of them it was like meeting old friends who had returned from death.

Who may say how long it took them to make the incredible march of nearly two thousand five hundred miles down to the Lidi Plains and the Land of Awful Shadow and across to the east coast and back up to Sari? But at last they came to the village, the village that most of them had never expected to see again; and among the first to welcome them was Dian the Beautiful. The John Tyler had made the long trip in safety.

Everyone was happy except Ah-gilak and Gamba. Ah-gilak had been happy until he saw O-aa. Gamba was never happy. Abner Perry was so happy that he cried, for those whom he thought his carelessness had condemned to death were safe and at home again. Already, mentally, he was inventing a submarine.

The Jungle

"My Lord, I may go no farther," said the Cambodian.

The young white man turned in astonishment upon his native guide. Behind them lay the partially cleared trail along which they had come. It was overgrown with tall grass that concealed the tree-stumps that had been left behind the axes of the road-builders.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Before them lay a ravine, at the near edge of which the trail ended. Beyond the ravine was the primitive jungle untouched by man.

"Why, we haven't even started yet!" exclaimed the white man. "You cannot turn back now. What do you suppose I hired you for?"

"I promised to take my lord to the jungle," replied the Cambodian. "There it is. I did not promise to enter it."

Gordon King lighted a cigarette. "Let's talk this thing over, my friend," he said. "It is yet early morning. We can get into the jungle as far as I care to go and out again before sundown."

The Cambodian shook his head. "I will wait for you here, my lord," he said; "but I may not enter the jungle, and if you are wise you will not."

"Why?" demanded King.

"There are wild elephants, my lord, and tigers," replied the Cambodian, "and panthers which hunt by day as well as by night."

"Why do you suppose we brought two rifles?" demanded the white. "At Kompong-Thom they told me you were a good shot and a brave man. You knew that we should have no need for rifles up to this point. No, sir, you have lost your nerve at the last minute, and I do not believe that it is because of tigers or wild elephants."

"There are other things deep in the jungle, my lord, that no man may look upon and live."

"What, for example?" demanded King.

"The ghosts of my ancestors," answered the Cambodian, "the Khmers who dwelt here in great cities ages ago. Within the dark shadows of the jungle the ruins of their cities still stand, and down the dark aisles of the forest pass the ancient kings and warriors and little sad-faced queens on ghostly elephants. Fleeing always from the horrible fate that overtook them in life, they pass for ever down the corridors of the jungle, and with them are the millions of the ghostly dead that once were their subjects. We might escape My Lord the Tiger and the wild elephants, but no man may look upon the ghosts of the dead Khmers and live."

"We shall be out before dark," insisted King.

"They are abroad both by day and by night," said the Cambodian. "It is the curse of Siva, the Destroyer."

King shrugged his shoulders, stamped out his cigarette and picked up his rifle. "Wait for me here, then," he said. "I shall be out before dark."

"You will never come out," said the Cambodian.

Beyond the ravine, savage, mysterious, rose the jungle, its depth screened from view by the spectral trunks of fromagers and a tangle of bamboo. At first the man could find no opening in that solid wall of vegetation. In its sheath, at his side, hung a heavy knife, but already the young day was so oppressively hot that the man did not relish the idea of exhausting himself at the very outset of his adventure if he could find some easier way. That it would be still hotter he knew, for Cambodia lies but twelve degrees above the equator in the same latitude as Nicaragua, the Sudan, and other places infamous for their

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

heat.

Along the edge of the ravine he searched, until at last he was rewarded by what appeared to be not by any means a trail but a far less formidable growth of bamboo through which he saw that he might easily force his way. Glancing back, he saw his Cambodian guide squatted upon his heels in mournful meditation. For an instant the young man hesitated, as though he was of a mind to try again to persuade the Cambodian to accompany him; but, as though immediately conscious of the futility of any such appeal, he turned again and pushed his way into the jungle.

He had advanced but a short distance when the heavy undergrowth gave way to a much more open forest. The spreading branches of the lofty trees cast upon the ground a perpetual shade, which had discouraged a heavy growth of underbrush.

How different looked the jungle from any picture that his imagination had conjured! How mysterious, but above all, how gloomy and how sinister! A fitting haunt, indeed, for the ghosts of weeping queens and murdered kings. Beneath his breath King cursed his Cambodian guide. He felt no fear, but he did feel an unutterable loneliness.

Only for a moment did he permit the gloom of the jungle to oppress him. He glanced at his watch, opened his pocket compass, and set a course as nearly due north as the winding avenues of the jungle permitted. He may have realised that he was something of a fool to have entered upon such an adventure alone; but it was doubtful that he would have admitted it even to himself, for, indeed, what danger was there? He had, he thought, sufficient water for the day; he was well armed and carried a compass and a heavy knife for trail-cutting. Perhaps he was a little short on food, but one cannot carry too heavy a load through the midday heat of a Cambodian jungle.

Gordon King was a young American who had recently graduated in medicine. Having an independent income, he had no need to practice his profession; and well realising, as he did, that there are already too many poor doctors in the world, he had decided to devote himself for a number of years to the study of strange maladies. For the moment he had permitted himself to be lured from his hobby by the intriguing mysteries of the Khmer ruins of Angkor—ruins that had worked so mightily upon his imagination that it had been impossible for him to withstand the temptation of some independent exploration on his own account. What he expected to discover he did not know; perhaps the ruins of a city more mighty than Angkor Thom; perhaps a temple of greater magnificence and grandeur than Angkor Vat; perhaps nothing more than a day's adventure. Youth is like that.

The jungle that had at first appeared so silent seemed to awaken at the footfall of the trespasser; scolding birds fluttered above him, and there were monkeys now that seemed to have come from nowhere. They, too, scolded as they hurtled through the lower terraces of the forest.

He found the going more difficult than he had imagined, for the floor of the jungle was far from level. There were gulleys and ravines to be crossed and fallen trees across the way, and always he must be careful to move as nearly north as was physically possible, else he might come out far from his Cambodian guide when he sought to return. His rifle grew hotter and heavier; his canteen of water insisted with the perversity of inanimate objects in sliding around in front and bumping him on the belly. He reeked

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

with sweat, and yet he knew that he could not have come more than a few miles from the point where he had left his guide. The tall grasses bothered him most, for he could not see what they hid; and when a cobra slid from beneath his feet and glided away, he realised more fully the menace of the grasses, which in places grew so high that they brushed his face.

At the end of two hours King was perfectly well assured that he was a fool to go on, but there was a certain proportion of bulldog stubbornness in his make-up that would not permit him to turn back so soon. He paused and drank from his canteen. The water was warm and had an unpleasant taste. The best that might be said of it was that it was wet. To his right and a little ahead sounded a sudden crash in the jungle. Startled, he cocked his rifle and stood listening. Perhaps a dead tree had fallen, he thought, or the noise might have been caused by a wild elephant. It was not a ghostly noise at all, and yet it had a strange effect upon his nerves, which, to his disgust, he suddenly realised were on edge. Had he permitted the silly folk tale of the Cambodian to so work upon his imagination that he translated into a suggestion of impending danger every unexpected interruption of the vast silence of the jungle?

Wiping the sweat from his face, he continued on his way, keeping as nearly a northerly direction as was possible. The air was filled with strange odours, among which was one more insistent than the others— a pungent, disagreeable odour that he found strangely familiar and yet could not immediately identify: Lazy air currents, moving sluggishly through the jungle, occasionally brought this odour to his nostrils, sometimes bearing but a vague suggestion of it and again with a strength that was almost sickening; and then suddenly the odour stimulated a memory cell that identified it. He saw himself standing on the concrete floor of a large building, the sides of which were lined with heavily barred cages in which lions and tigers paced nervously to and fro or sprawled in melancholy meditation of their lost freedom; and in his nostrils was the same odour that impinged upon them now. However, it is one thing to contemplate tigers from the safe side of iron bars, and it is quite another thing suddenly to realise their near presence unrestrained by bars of any sort. It occurred to him now that he had not previously considered tigers as anything more serious than a noun; they had not represented a concrete reality. But that mental conception had passed now, routed by the odour that clung in his nostrils. He was not afraid; but realising for the first time, that he was in actual danger, he advanced more warily, always on the alert.

Some marshy ground and several deep ravines had necessitated various detours. It was already almost noon, the time upon which he was determined he must turn back in order that he might reach the point where he had left his guide before darkness fell upon the jungle. Constantly for some time there had lurked within his consciousness a question as to his ability to back-track upon his trail. He had had no experience in woodcraft, and he had already found it far more difficult than he had imagined it would be to maintain a true course by compass; nor had he taken the precautions to blaze his trail in any way, as he might have done by marking the trees with the heavy trail cutter that he carried.

Gordon King was disgusted with himself; he had found no ruins; he was hot, tired and hungry. He realised that he had lost all interest in ruins of any and all descriptions,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and after a brief rest he turned back towards the south. It was then, almost immediately, that he realised the proportions of the task that lay ahead of him. For six hours he had been plodding deep into the jungle. If he had averaged two miles an hour, he had covered a distance of twelve miles. He did not know how fast he had walked, but he realised that twelve miles was bad enough when he considered that he had started out fresh and well fortified by a hearty breakfast and that he was returning empty, tired, and footsore.

However, he still believed that he could make the distance easily before dark if he could keep to the trail. He was well prepared physically by years of athletic training, having been a field and track man at college. He was glad now that he had gone in for long distance running; he had won a marathon or two and was never appalled at the thought of long distances to be covered on foot. That he could throw the javelin and hurl the discus to almost championship distances seemed less helpful to him in an emergency of the present nature than his running experience. His only regret on this score was that during the year that he had been out of college he had permitted himself to become soft—a condition that had become increasingly noticeable with every mile that he put behind him.

Within the first minute that Gordon King had been upon the back-trail toward his guide he had discovered that it was absolutely impossible for his untrained eyes to find any sign of the trail that he supposed he had made coming in. The way that he thought he had come, his compass told him, lay towards the south-west; but he could find no direct-ing spoor.

With a shake of his head, he resorted again to his compass; but due south pointed into a dense section of jungle through which he was positive he had not come. He wondered whether he should attempt to skirt every obstacle, thereby making long and wide detours or continue straight toward the south, deviating from his direct line only when confronted by insurmountable obstacles. The latter, he felt, would be the shortest way out of the jungle in point of distance, and he was confident that it would bring him as close to his Cambodian guide as any other route that he might elect to follow.

As he approached the patch of jungle that had seemed at first to bar his way completely, he found that it was much more open than he had suspected and that, while the trees were large and grew rather close together, there was little or no underbrush. Glancing often at his compass, he entered the gloomy forest. The heat, which had grown intense, possibly aggravated the fatigue which he now realised was rapidly attaining the proportions of a real menace. He had not appreciated when he stepped out upon this foolish adventure how soft his muscles had become, and as he contemplated the miles and hours of torture that lay ahead of him, he suddenly felt very helpless and alone.

The weight of his rifle, revolver, ammunition, and water represented a definite handicap that he knew might easily defeat his hope of escaping from the jungle before dark. The smell of the great cats was heavy in the air. Against this ever-present premonition of danger, however, was the fact that he had already spent over six hours in the jungle without having caught a glimpse of any of the dread Carnivore. He was convinced, therefore, that he was in little danger of attack by day and that he might have a better chance of getting out of the jungle before dark if he discarded his weapons, which would unquestionably be useless to him after dark.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

And then again, he argued, perhaps, after all, there were no man-eaters in the jungle, for he had heard that not all tigers were man-eaters. For the lesser cats, the panthers and leopards, he did not entertain so great a fear, notwithstanding the fact that he had been assured that they were quite as dangerous as their larger cousins. The size, the reputation and the fearful mien of My Lord the Tiger dwarfed his estimate of the formidable nature of the others.

A large, flat stone, backed by denser foliage, suggested that he rest for a moment while deliberating upon the wisdom of abandoning his weapons. The canteen of water, with its depleted store of warm and unpleasant-tasting liquid, he knew he must cling to until it had been emptied. Before he sat down upon the stone he leaned his rifle against a tree, and unbuckling the belt which supported his revolver and also held his ammunition, he tossed it upon the ground at his feet. What a relief! Instantly there left him the fear that he might not be able to get out of the jungle before dark. Relieved of what had become a constantly increasing burden, he felt like a new man and equal to any efforts that the return march might demand of him. He seated himself upon the flat rock and took a very small swallow from the contents of his canteen. He had been sparing of his water and he was glad that he had been, for now he was convinced that it would last him through the remainder of the day, giving him strength and refreshment when he would most need them.

As he replaced the screw cap upon his canteen, he chanced to glance at the rock upon which he was sitting and for the first time was struck by the fact that it seemed incongruously out of place in the midst of this jungle of great trees and foliage. Idly he brushed an accumulation of leaf mould from its surface, and what he saw revealed beneath increased his curiosity sufficiently to cause him to expose the entire surface of the rock, disclosing in bold bas-relief the head and shoulders of a warrior.

Here, then, was the reward for which he had struggled; but he found that it left him a little cold.

His interest in Khmer ruins seemed to have evaporated beneath the torrid heat of the jungle. However, he still maintained sufficient curiosity to speculate upon the presence of this single relic of the past. His examination of the ruins of Angkor Thom suggested that this must have been a part of some ancient edifice and if this were true the rest must be close at hand—perhaps just behind the screen of jungle that formed the background of this solitary fragment.

Rising, he turned and tried to peer through the foliage, separating the leaves and branches with his hand. A few hours before his heart would have leaped at what he glimpsed vaguely now through the leafy screen—a vast pile of masonry through whose crumbling arches he saw stately columns still defying the ruthless inroads of the jungle in the lonely, hopeless battle they had been waging through the silent centuries.

And then it was that, as he stood gazing, half-fascinated by the tragic magnificence that still clung to this crumbling monument to the transient glories and the vanities of man, his eye was attracted by a movement within the ruins; just a glimpse he got where a little sunlight filtered through a fallen roof—a little patch of fawn with dark brown stripes. In the instant that he saw it, it was gone. There had been no sound, just a passing of something among the ruins. But Gordon King felt the cold sweat upon his brow as hastily

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

he gathered up his belt and buckled it about his waist and seized his rifle. Blessed weight! He thanked God that he had not gone on without it.

Forgotten were the ruins of the Khmers as he strode cautiously on through the forest, constantly alert now, looking to the right and to the left, and turning often a hasty glance behind him. Soft are the pads of the carnivores. They give forth no sound. When the end came, if it did come, he knew that there would be a sudden rush and then the terrible fangs and talons. He experienced the uncanny sensation of unseen eyes upon him. He was sure that the beast was stalking him. It was maddening not to be able to see it again.

He found it necessary to consult his compass frequently in order to keep to his course. His instrument was a small one, constructed like a hunting-case watch. When the catch was released the cover flew open, releasing the needle, which, when the cover was closed, was locked in position, that its bearings might not be injured by sudden changes of position.

King was on the point of checking his direction; but as he held the compass open in his hand, he thought that he heard a slight noise behind him. As he glanced back the toe of his boot struck a rock; and trying to regain his equilibrium, he stumbled into a patch of tumbled sandstone rocks, among which he sprawled heavily upon his face. Spurred by thoughts of the sound that he had heard behind him, he scrambled quickly to his feet; but though he searched the jungle as far as his eyes could reach in every direction, he could discern no sign of any menacing beast.

When he had fallen he had dropped his compass, and now that he was satisfied that no danger lurked in his immediate vicinity, he set about to recover the instrument. He found it quickly enough, but one glance at it sent his heart into his boots—his compass was broken beyond possibility of repair. It was several seconds before the full measure of this calamity unfolded itself to his stunned consciousness.

For a moment Gordon King was appalled by the accident that had befallen him, for he knew that it was a real catastrophe. Practically unversed in woodcraft, he found himself in a jungle overhung by foliage so dense that it was impossible to get his bearings from the sun, menaced by the ever-present danger of the great cats and faced with what he felt now was definite assurance that he would have to spend the night in these surroundings with only a remote likelihood that he ever would be able to find his way out in the event that he did not fall prey to the carnivores or to thirst.

But only momentarily did he permit himself to be crushed by contemplation of his predicament. He was well armed, and he knew that he was resourceful and intelligent. Suddenly there came to him a realisation of something that gave him renewed strength and hope.

Few men know until they are actually confronted by lethal danger whether at heart they are courageous or cowardly. Never before had Gordon King been called upon to make such an appraisal of himself. Alone in this mysterious forest, uninfluenced by the possibilities of the acclaim or reproaches of another, there was borne in upon his consciousness a definite realisation of self-sufficiency. He fully realised the dangers that confronted him; he did not relish them, but he felt no sensation of fear.

A new feeling of confidence pervaded him as he set out again in the direction that he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

had been going before he had fallen and broken his compass. He was still alert and watchful, but he did not glance behind him as much as he had previously. He felt that he was making good headway, and he was sure that he was keeping a true course toward the south. Perhaps, after all, he would get out before dark, he thought. The condition that irritated him most was his increasing thirst, against which he was compelled to pit every ounce of his will power that he might conserve the small amount of water that remained in his canteen.

The route he was following was much more open than that along which he had entered the jungle, so that he was buoyantly hopeful that he would come out of his predicament and the jungle before night had enveloped the gloomy haunt of the great cats; yet he realised that at best he would win by but a small margin.

He was very tired now, a fact that was borne in upon him by the frequency with which he stumbled, and when he fell he found that each time it was only with increased effort that he rose again to his feet. He was rather angry with himself for this seeming weakness. He knew that there was only one thing that he could do to overcome it, and that thing he could not afford to do, for the fleeting minutes of precious daylight would not pause in their flight while he rested.

As the miles fell slowly and painfully behind him and the minutes raced as though attempting to escape him and leave him to the mercy of the darkness and the tigers, the hope that had been newborn in him for a while commenced to desert him; yet he stumbled wearily on, wondering if the jungle had no end and hoping against hope that beyond the next wall of verdure he would break through into the clearing that would mean life and food and water for him.

"It can't be far now," he thought, "and there must be an hour of full daylight ahead." He was almost exhausted; a little rest would renew his strength, he knew, and there, just ahead of him, was a large, flat rock. He would rest for a moment upon it and renew his strength.

As he seated himself upon this hard resting-place, something upon its surface caught his horrified gaze. It was the head and shoulders of a warrior, cut in bold bas-relief.

There are circumstances in which even the bravest of men experience a hopelessness of utter despair. Such was King's state of mind when he realised that he had wandered in an aimless circle since noon and was back again at his starting-point. Weakened by physical exhaustion and hunger, he contemplated the future with nothing but pessimism. He had had his chance to escape from the jungle, and he had failed. There was no reason to believe that another day might bring greater opportunity. Rest might recoup his strength slightly, but what he needed was food, and on the morrow he would set forth not with a canteen full of water, but with only a few drops with which to moisten his parched throat. He had stumbled through plenty of mud-holes during the day, but he knew that it would doubtless prove fatal to drink from such wells of pollution.

As he stood there with bowed head, searching his mind for some solution of his problem, his eyes gradually returned to focus, and as they did so he saw on the surface of the soft ground beneath his gaze something that, for the moment, drove thoughts of hunger and thirst and fatigue from his mind—it was the pug of a tiger, fresh made in the soft

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

earth.

"Why worry about to-morrow?" murmured King. "If half what that Cambodian told me about this place at night is true, I'll be in luck if I see another to-morrow."

He had read somewhere that tigers started to hunt late in the afternoon, and he knew that they seldom climbed trees; but he was also aware of the fact that leopards and panthers do and that the latter, especially, on account of their size and inherent viciousness, were fully as much to be dreaded as My Lord the Tiger himself. Realising that he must find some sort of shelter as quickly as possible and recalling the ruins that he had seen through the screen of foliage behind the rock before which he stood, he parted the leafy screen ahead of him and forced his way through.

Here the vegetation was less dense, as though the lesser growth of the jungle had halted in fearful reverence before this awe-inspiring work of man. Majestic even in its ruin was the great rectangular pile that loomed clearly now before the eyes of the American. But not all of the jungle had feared to encroach upon its sanctity. Great trees had taken root upon its terraced walls, among its columns and its arches, and by the slow and resistless pressure of their growth had forced aside the supporting foundation and brought much of the edifice into complete ruin.

Just before him rose a tower that seemed better to have withstood the ravages of time than other portions of the building. It rose some sixty feet above the ground, and near the summit was carved in heroic size the face of a god that King suspected was Siva, the Destroyer. A few feet above the rectangular doorway was a crumbling ledge and just above that a smaller opening that might have been a window. Behind it all was dark, but it carried to King's mind the suggestion of a hiding-place—a sanctuary in the very bosom of Siva.

The face of the weather-worn tower offered sufficient foothold for an agile climber, and the way was made easier by the corbelled construction that supported a series of bas-reliefs rising one above another from the ground level to the edge above the doorway. It was not, however, without considerable difficulty that King, already almost exhausted, finally reached the ledge, where he sat down for a moment's rest. Just above him was the opening which he wished to investigate. As he let his thoughts precede him in that investigation of this possible refuge, they discovered, as thoughts are prone to do, enough unpleasant possibilities to cast a pall of gloom over him. Doubtless it was the den of a panther.

What more secluded spot could this horrid beast discover in which to lie up after feeding or in which to bear and rear its young?

The suggestion forced him to immediate action. He did not believe that there was any panther there, but he could not endure the suspense of doubt. Cocking his rifle, he arose and approached the opening, the lower sill of which was just about level with his breast as he stood upon the ledge above the doorway. Within all was black and silent. He listened intently. If there were anything hiding there, he should hear it breathe; but no sound broke the utter silence of the tomb-like vault. Pushing his rifle ahead of him, King climbed to the sill, where he remained in silence for a moment until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom of the interior, which was slightly relieved by light filter-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing in through a crack at one side. A few feet below him was a stone floor, and he could see dimly now that the chamber extended the full breadth and width of the tower. In the centre of the apartment rose something, the nature of which he could not distinguish; but he was sure that it was inanimate.

Stepping down to the floor and advancing cautiously, his rifle ready, King made a complete circuit of the walls. There was no panther there, nor any signs that one ever had been there. Apparently the place had never been entered by any creature since that day of mystery, centuries gone, when the priests and temple girls had departed never to return. Turning toward the object in the centre of the room, King quickly identified it as the symbol of Siva and realised that he was doubtless in the Holy of Holies.

Walking back to the window, he seated himself upon the sill, took a small swallow from his scant store of water and lighted a cigarette; and as the sudden night fell upon the jungle, he heard the crisp fall of padded feet upon dry leaves in the courtyard of the temple beneath him.

His position, well above the floor of the jungle, imparted a feeling of security; and the quiet enjoyment of a cigarette soothed his nerves and, temporarily at least, allayed the gnawing pangs of hunger. He derived a form of mild enjoyment by speculating upon the surprise and consternation of his friends could they visualise his present situation. Perhaps uttermost in his thoughts was Susan Anne Prentice, and he knew that he would be in for a good scolding could she be aware of the predicament into which his silly and ill-advised adventure had placed him.

He recalled their parting and the motherly advice she had given him. What a peach of a girl Susan Anne was! It seemed strange to him that she had never married, for there were certainly enough eligible fellows always hanging around her. He was rather glad that she had not, for he realised that he should feel lost without the promise of her companionship when he returned home. He had known Susan Anne as far back as he could remember, and they had always been pals. In the city of their birth their fathers' grounds adjoined and there was no fence between; at the little lake where they spent their summers they were next-door neighbours. Susan Anne had been as much a part of Gordon King's life as had his father or his mother, for each was an only child and they had been as close to one another as brother and sister.

He remembered telling her, the night before he had left home for this trip, that she would doubtless be married by the time he returned. "No chance," she had said with an odd little smile.

"I do not see why not," he had argued. "I know at least half a dozen men who are wild about you."

"Not the right one," she had replied.

"So there is someone?"

"Perhaps."

He wondered who the fellow could be and decided that he must be an awful chump not to appreciate the wonderful qualities of Susan Anne. In so far as looks were concerned, she had it on all the girls of his acquaintance, in addition whereto she had a good head on her shoulders and was a regular fellow in every other respect. Together they

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

had often bemoaned the fact that she was not a man, that they might have palled around on his wanderings together.

His reveries were blasted by a series of low, coughing roars down there somewhere in the darkness at a little distance from the ruins. They were followed by a crashing sound, as of a large body dashing through underbrush. Then there was a scream and a thud, followed by low growls and silence. King felt his scalp tingle. What tragedy of the jungle night had been enacted in that black, mysterious void?

The sudden and rather terrifying noise and its equally abrupt cessation but tended to impress upon the man and to accentuate the normal, mysterious silence of the jungle. He knew that the jungle teemed with life; yet, for the most part, it moved as silently as might the ghosts of the priests and the temple girls with which imagination might easily people this crumbling ruin of the temple of the Destroyer. Often from below him and from the surrounding jungle came the suggestion of noises—furtive, stealthy sounds that might have been the ghosts of long-dead noises. Sometimes he could interpret these sounds as the cracking of a twig or the rustling of leaves beneath a padded paw, but more often there was just the sense of things below him—grim and terrible creatures that lived by death alone.

And thus the night wore on, until at last day came. He had dozed intermittently, sitting upon the window ledge with his back against its ancient stone frame, his rifle across his lap. He did not feel much refreshed, but when the full light of the day had enveloped the jungle he clambered swiftly down the ruins to the ground and set out once again toward the south, filled with a determination to push on regardless of hunger and fatigue until he had escaped the hideous clutches of this dismal forest, which now seemed to him to have assumed a malignant personality that was endeavouring to foil his efforts and retain him for ever for some sinister purpose of its own. He had come to hate the jungle; he wanted to shout aloud against it the curses that were in his heart. He was impelled to discharge his rifle against it as though it were some creature barring his way to liberty. But he held himself in leash, submerging everything to the desire for escape.

He found that he moved more slowly than he had upon the preceding day. Obstacles were more difficult to surmount, and he was forced to stop more often to rest. These delays galled him; but when he tried to push on more rapidly he often stumbled and fell, and each time he found it more difficult to arise. Then there dawned upon him the realisation that he might not have sufficient strength to reach the edge of the jungle, and for the first time unquestioned fear assailed him.

He sat down upon the ground and, leaning his back against a tree, argued the matter out thoroughly in his own mind. At last his strength of will overcame his fears, so that realisation of the fact that he might not get out that day no longer induced an emotional panic.

"If not to-day, to-morrow," he thought; "if not tomorrow, then the day after. Am I a weakling that I cannot carry on for a few days? Am I to die of starvation in a country abounding in game?"

Physical stamina being so considerably influenced as it is by the condition of the mind, it was with a sense of renewed power that King arose and continued on his way,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

but imbued now not solely with the desire to escape immediately from the jungle but to wrest from it sustenance and strength that it might be forced to aid him in his escape even though the consummation of his hope might be deferred indefinitely. The psychological effect of this new mental attitude wrought a sudden metamorphosis. He was no longer a hunted fugitive fleeing for his life; he had become in fact a jungle dweller hunting for food and for water. The increasing heat of the advancing day had necessitated inroads upon his scant supply of the latter, yet he still had a few drops left; and these he was determined not to use until he could no longer withstand the tortures of thirst.

He had by now worked out a new and definite plan of procedure; he would work constantly downhill, keeping a sharp look out for game, knowing that eventually he must come to some of the numerous small streams that would ultimately lead him to the Mekong, the large central river that bisects Cambodia on its way to the China Sea; or perchance he might hit upon one of those streams that ran south and emptied into the Tonle-Sap.

He found it much easier going downhill, and he was glad on this account that he had adopted his present plan. The nature of the country changed a little, too; open spaces were more numerous. Sometimes these flats were marshy, requiring wide detours, and usually they were covered with elephant grass that resembled the cat tails with which he had been familiar as a boy during his summer vacations in the country. He did not like these spaces because they appeared too much the natural habitat of snakes, and he recalled having read somewhere that in a single year there had been sixteen thousand recorded deaths from snake bites in British India alone. This recollection came to him while he was in the centre of a large patch of elephant grass, and consequently he moved very slowly, examining the ground ahead of him carefully at each step. This, of course, necessitated pushing the reeds apart, a slow and laborious procedure; but it also resulted in his moving more quietly; so that when he emerged from the reeds a sight met his eyes that doubtless he would not have seen had he crashed through noisily.

Directly in front of him and maybe fifty paces distant under a great spreading banyan tree lay several wild pigs, all of them comfortably asleep except one old boar, which seemed to be on guard. That King's approach had not been entirely noiseless was evidenced by the fact that the great beast was standing head-on and alert, his ears uppricked, looking straight at the point at which the man emerged from the elephant grass.

For an instant man and beast stood silently eyeing one another. King saw lying near the boar a half-grown pig, that would make better eating than the tough old tusker. He brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired at the sleeping pig, expecting the remainder of the herd to turn and flee into the jungle; but he had not taken into consideration the violent disposition of the boar. The rest of the herd, awakened with startling suddenness by the unaccustomed report of the rifle, leaped to their feet, stood for an instant in bewilderment, and then turned and disappeared among the undergrowth. Not so the boar. At the crack of the rifle he charged.

There is something rather awe-inspiring in the charge of a wild boar, especially if one happens to be in the path of it, as King was. Perhaps because of his unfamiliarity with the habits of wild boars, the charge was entirely unexpected; and in the brief instant that he had in which to defend himself, he realised that he did not know what was the most vulnerable spot in a boar's anatomy. All that he sensed in that all too short interval were

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

a pair of great flashing tusks, huge jowls, two red-rimmed wicked little eyes, and a stiffly upright tail bearing down upon him with all the velocity and apparently quite the weight of a steam locomotive.

There seemed to be nothing to shoot at but a face. His first shot struck the boar squarely between the eyes and dropped him, but only for an instant. Then he was up again and coming. Giving thanks for a magazine rifle, King pumped three more bullets straight into that terrifying countenance, and to the last one the great beast rolled over against King's feet. None too sure that he had more than stunned him, the man quickly put a bullet through the savage heart.

It had been a close call, and he trembled a little to think what his fate might have been had he been seriously wounded and left there dying in the jungle. Assured that the boar was dead, he went quickly to the pig that had been killed instantly by his first shot. As his knife sank into the flesh, he became suddenly conscious of a change within him. He was moved by urgings that he had never sensed before. He was impelled to bury his teeth in the raw flesh and gorge himself. He realised that this was partially the result of gnawing hunger; but yet it seemed deeper, something primitive and bestial that always had been a part of him but that never before had had occasion to come to the surface. He knew in that brief instant the feeling of the wild beast for its kill. He looked quickly and furtively about to see if there might be any creature bold enough to contest his possession of the fruit of his prowess. He felt the snarling muscles of his upper lip tense and he sensed within him the rumblings of a growl, though no sound passed his lips.

It required a determined effort of will power to refrain from eating the flesh raw, so hungry was he; but he managed to conquer the urge and set about building a fire, though the meal that he finally produced was scarcely more than a compromise, the meat being charred upon the outside and raw within. After he had eaten he felt renewed strength, but now the tortures of thirst assailed him more poignantly than before. His canteen was empty; and though he had passed by stagnant pools of water during the day, he had been able to resist the temptation to drink, realising, as he did, the germs of terrible fever that lurked in these slimy pools.

The next few days constituted a long nightmare of suffering and disappointment. He found his path toward the Mekong barred by impassable swamps that forced him northward over a broken terrain of ravines and ridges that taxed his rapidly waning strength. For some time after leaving the marshes he had seen no water, but upon the third day he came to a pool in the bottom of a ravine. That it was the drinking-hole of wild beasts was evidenced by the multitude of tracks in the muddy bank. The liquid was green and thick, but not for an instant did the man hesitate. Throwing himself upon his belly, he plunged his hands and face into the foul mess and drank. Neither fever nor death could be worse than the pangs of thirst.

Later that day he shot a monkey and, cooking some of the flesh, appeased his hunger; and thus for several days he wandered, shooting an occasional monkey for food and drinking water wherever he found it. He was always conscious of the presence of the great cats, though only upon one or two occasions did he catch fleeting glimpses of them; but at night he heard them moving softly beneath some tree in which he had found precarious sanctuary, where he crouched nursing the hope that no leopard or panther would

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

discover him. Occasionally he saw small herds of wild elephants, and these he always gave a wide berth. He had long given up all hope of escaping from the jungle, and he could not but wonder at man's tenacity in clinging to life in the face of suffering and hardship when he knew that at best he was but prolonging his agony and only temporarily delaying the inevitable.

Seven days and seven nights he had spent in the jungle, and the last night had been the worst of all. He had dozed intermittently. The jungle had been full of noises, and he had seen strange, dim figures passing beneath him. When the eighth morning broke, he was shivering with cold. His chattering teeth reminded him of castanets. He looked about him for dancers and was surprised that he saw none. Something moved through the foliage of the jungle beneath him. It was yellowish-brown with dark stripes. He called to it and it disappeared. Quite remarkably he ceased to be cold, and instead his body burned as though consumed by internal fires. The tree in which he sat swayed dizzily, and then with an effort he pulled himself together and slipped to the ground. He found that he was very tired and that he was forced to stop to rest every few minutes, and sometimes he shook with cold and again he burned with heat.

It was about noon; the sun was high and the heat terrific. King lay shivering where he had fallen at the foot of a silk-cotton tree, against the bole of which he leaned for support. Far down a jungle aisle he saw an elephant. It was not alone; there were other things preceding it—things that could not be in this deserted primeval jungle. He closed his eyes and shook his head. It was only an hallucination brought on by a touch of fever, of that he was certain. But when he opened his eyes again the elephant was still there, and he recognised the creatures that preceded it as warriors clothed in brass. They were coming closer. King crawled back into the concealing verdure of the underbrush. His head ached terribly. There was a buzzing hum in his ears that drowned all other sounds. The caravan passed within fifty feet of him, but he heard no sound. There were archers and spear men—brown men with cuirasses of burnished brass—and then came the elephant trapped in regal splendour, and in a gorgeous howdah upon its back rode a girl. He saw her profile first, and then as something attracted her attention she turned her face full toward him. It was a face of exquisite and exotic beauty, but a sad face with frightened eyes. Her trappings were more gorgeous than the trappings of the elephant. Behind her marched other warriors, but presently all were gone down the aisles of the jungle in spectral silence.

"Weeping queens on misty elephants!" He had read the phrase somewhere in a book. "Gad!" he exclaimed. "What weird tricks fever plays upon one's brain. I could have sworn that what I saw was real."

Slowly he staggered to his feet and pushed on, whither or in what direction he had no idea. It was a blind urge of self-preservation that goaded him forward; to what goal, he did not know; all that he knew was that if he remained where he was he must inevitably perish. Perhaps he would perish anyway, but if he went on, there was a chance. Figures, strange and familiar, passed in jumbled and fantastic procession along the corridors of his mind. Susan Anne Prentice clothed in brass rode upon the back of an elephant. A weeping queen with painted cheeks and rouged lips came and knelt beside him offering him a draft of cold, crystal-clear water from a golden goblet, but when he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

lifted it to his lips the goblet became a battered canteen from which oozed a slimy green liquid that burned his mouth and nauseated him. Then he saw soldiers in brass who held platters containing steaming sirloin steaks and French-fried potatoes, which changed magically to sherbert, iced tea, and waffles with maple syrup.

"This will never do," thought King. "I am going absolutely daffy. I wonder how long the fever lasts, or how long it takes to finish a fellow."

He was lying upon the ground at the edge of a little clearing partially hid by the tall grass into which he had sunk. Suddenly everything seemed to whirl around in circles, and then the world went black and he lost consciousness. It was very late in the afternoon when he came to; but the fever seemed to have left him, temporarily at least, and his mind was clear.

"This can't go on much longer," he soliloquised. "If I don't find some place pretty soon where I can lie in safety until after the fever has passed entirely, it will be just too bad. I wonder what it feels like to be mauled by a tiger."

But when he attempted to rise he discovered to his horror that he had not sufficient strength to get to his feet. He still clung to his rifle. He had long since made up his mind that in it lay his principal hope of salvation. Without it, he must go hungry and fall prey to the first beast that attacked him. He knew that if he discarded it and his heavy belt of ammunition he might stagger on a short distance and then, when he fell again, he would be helpless.

As he lay there looking out into the little clearing, speculating upon his fate and trying to estimate the number of hours of life that might remain to him, he saw a strange figure enter the clearing. It was an old man with a straggly white beard growing sparsely upon his chin and upper lip. He wore a long, yellow cloak and a fantastic headdress, above which he carried a red umbrella. He moved slowly, his eyes bent upon the ground.

"Damned fever," muttered King, and shut his eyes.

He kept them closed for a minute or two, but when he opened them the old man was still in sight, though by this time he had almost crossed the clearing, and now there was another figure in the picture. From out of the foliage beyond the clearing appeared a savage, snarling face—a great, vicious, yellow-fanged face; yellowish-white and tan with broken markings of dark brown stripes that looked almost black—a hideous head, and yet, at the same time, a gorgeously majestic head. Slowly, silently the great tiger emerged into the clearing, its gaunt, flat-sided body moving sinuously, its yellow-green eyes blazing terribly at the back of the unconscious old man.

"God, how real!" breathed King. "I could swear that I really saw them both. Only the impossible figure of that old man with the red parasol could convince me that they are both made of the same material as the spectral elephant, the weeping queen, and the brass-bound soldiers."

The tiger was creeping rapidly toward the old man. His speed gradually accelerated.

"I can't stand it," cried King, raising his rifle to his shoulder. "They may be only an hallucination—"

There was a short coughing roar as the tiger charged, and at the same instant King

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

squeezed the trigger of his rifle and fainted.

Vay Thon, high priest of the temple of Siva in the city of Lodidhapura, was the source of much anxiety on the part of the lesser priests, who felt responsible to Siva and the King for the well-being of Vay Thon. But how might one cope with the vagaries of a weakness so holy and, at the same time, so erratic as that which occasionally claimed the amnesic Vay Thon? They tried to watch over him at all times, but it is difficult to maintain constant espionage over one so holy, whose offices or whose meditations may not lightly be broken in upon by lesser mortals, even though they be priests of the great god, Siva.

All was well when Vay Thon confined himself in his meditations to the innermost sanctum of the Holy of Holies; here, in the safe-keeping of his god, he was isolated from mankind and safe from danger. But the meditations of Vay Thon were not always thus securely cloistered. Often he strolled along the broad terrace beside the mighty temple, where wrapped in utter forgetfulness of himself and of the world he walked in silent communion with his god.

With his long, yellow cloak and his red parasol he was also a familiar figure upon the streets of Lodidhapura. Here he was often accompanied by lesser priests, who walked in cuirasses of polished brass, who marched ahead and in the rear. Of all these symbols of worldly pomp and power, Vay Thon was entirely unconscious. During those periods that he was wrapped in the oblivion of meditation and upon the numerous occasions when he had managed to leave the temple ground unperceived, he had walked through the streets of the city equally unaware of all that surrounded him. Upon three separate and distinct occasions he had been found wandering in the jungle, and Lodivarman, the King, had threatened to wreak dire punishment upon the lesser priests should harm ever befall Vay Thon during one of these excursions.

It so happened that upon this very day Vay Thon had walked out of the city and into the jungle alone. That he had been able to leave a walled city, the gates of which were heavily guarded by veteran warriors, might have seemed a surprising thing to the citizens of Lodidhapura; but not so to the one familiar with the secret galleries that lay beneath the temple and the palace, through which the ancient builders of Lodidhapura might well have expected to flee the wrath of the downtrodden slaves who comprised 75 per cent of the population. Though times have changed with the passing centuries, the almost forgotten passageways remain. It was through one of these that Vay Thon reached the jungle. He did not know that he was in the jungle. He was as totally oblivious of his surroundings as is one who is wrapped in deep and dreamless sleep.

The last that the lesser priests had seen of Vay Thon was when he had entered the Holy of Holies, which houses the symbol of Siva. As they had noticed a glassy expression in his eyes, they had known that he was entering upon a period of meditation. Therefore, they maintained a watch at the entrance to the chamber, but felt no concern during the passing hours since they knew that Vay Thon was safe. What they did not know of was the loose stone in the flooring of the chamber directly behind the symbol of Siva, or the passageway beneath, which led to a ravine in the jungle beyond the city wall. And so during those hours Vay Thon wandered far into the jungle, and with him, perhaps, walked Siva, the Destroyer.

His rapt meditation, which amounted to almost total unconsciousness of his mun-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

dane surroundings, was shattered by a noise of terrific violence such as had never before impinged upon the ears of Vay Thon or any other inhabitant of Lodidhapura, Awakened suddenly as from a deep sleep, the startled priest wheeled about amazed at his surroundings, but more amazed by the sight which greeted his eyes. Wallowing in its own gore scarce three paces behind him lay a great tiger in its death throes; and a little to his right, a wisp of blue smoke rose from some grasses at the edge of the clearing.

When King regained consciousness he was vaguely aware of voices that seemed to be floating in the air about him. The sounds were meaningless, but they conveyed to his fevered brain an assurance of human origin. He opened his eyes. Above him was a brown face. Supporting his head and shoulders he felt the naked flesh of a human arm. His eyes wandered. Standing close was a woman, naked but for a sampot drawn diaperwise between her legs and knotted at the belt. Hiding fearfully behind her was a naked child. The man who supported him spoke to him, but in a language that he could not understand.

From whence had these people come, or were they but figments of his fevered imagination like the old man with the yellow cloak and the red parasol? Were they no more real than the spectral tiger that he had shot at in his delirium? He closed his eyes in an effort to gain control of his senses, but when he opened them again the man and the woman and the child were still there. With a sigh of resignation he gave it up. His throbbing temples were unequal to the demands of sustained thought. He closed his eyes, and his chin dropped upon his breast.

"He is dying," said Che, looking up at the woman.

"Let us take him to our dwelling," replied Kangrey, the woman. "I will watch over him while you lead the holy priest back to Lodidhapura."

As the man lifted King in his arms and turned to carry him away, the American caught a glimpse of an old man in a long, yellow cloak and a strange headdress, who carried above his head a red parasol. The American closed his eyes against the persistent hallucination of his fever. His head swam, and once again he lost consciousness.

King never knew how long he remained unconscious, but when he next opened his eyes he found himself lying upon a bed of grasses in the interior of a dark retreat which he thought, at first, was a cave. Gradually he discerned the presence of a man, a woman, and a child. He did not remember ever having seen them before. The child was naked, and the man and woman were clothed only in sampots. The woman was ministering to him, forcing a liquid between his lips.

Slowly and sluggishly his mind commenced to function, and at last he recalled them—the creatures of the hallucination that had conjured the image of the old man in the yellow cloak with the red parasol, and the charging tiger that he had dreamed of shooting. Would the fever never leave him? Was he to die thus alone in the sombre jungle tortured by hallucinations that might terminate only with his discovery by a tiger?

But yet how real was the feeling and taste of the liquid that the woman was forcing between his lips. He could even feel the animal warmth of the bare arm that was supporting his head and shoulders. Could any figment of a fever-tortured brain be as realistic as these? Repeatedly he closed his eyes and opened them again, but always the same pic-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ture was there before him. He raised one hand weakly and touched the woman's shoulder and face. They seemed real. He was almost convinced that they were when he sank again into unconsciousness.

For days Gordon King hovered between life and death. Kangrey, the woman, ministered to him, utilising the lore of the primitive jungle dweller in the brewing of medicinal potions from the herbs of the forest. Of equal or perhaps greater value were certain incantations which she droned monotonously above him.

Little Uda, the child, was much impressed with all these unusual and remarkable occurrences. The stranger with the pale skin was the first momentous event of his little life. The strange clothing that his parents had removed from their helpless charge thrilled him with awe, as did the rifle, the knife, and the revolver, which he rightfully guessed to be weapons, though he had no more conception of the medianism of the firearms than did his parents. Uda was indefatigable in his search for the herbs and roots that Kangrey, his mother, required; and when Che returned from the hunt it was always Uda who met him first with a full and complete history of their patient's case brought down to the last minute with infinite attention to details.

At last the fever broke. Though it left King weak and helpless in body, his mind was clear, and he knew at last that the man and the woman and the child were no figments of his imagination. Of course, the old man with the yellow cloak and the red parasol had been but an hallucination of a kind with the charging tiger; but this kindly brown woman, who was nursing him back to health, was real; and his eyes filled as the thanks which he could not voice welled up within his breast.

A day and a night without any return of the fever or hallucination convinced King that the ministration of the kindly natives had rid him of the illness that had nearly killed him, yet he was so weak that he still had little or no hope of ultimate recovery. He had not the strength to raise a hand to his face. It required a real physical effort to turn his head from side to side upon the rough pallet of grasses upon which he lay. He noticed that they never left him alone for long. Either the woman or the child was with him during the day, and all three slept near him upon the floor of their little den at night. In the daytime the woman or the child brushed the flies and other insects from him with a leafy branch and gave him food at frequent intervals. What the food was he did not know except that it was semi-liquid, but now that his fever had passed he was so ravenous that whatever it was they gave him he relished it.

One day when he had been left alone with the little boy longer than usual, the child, possibly tiring of the monotony of brushing insects from the body of the pale one, deserted his post, leaving King alone. King did not care, for much of his time, anyway, was spent in sleep and he had become so accustomed to the insects that they no longer irritated him as they formerly had. He was awakened from a sleep by the feel of a rough hand upon his face. Opening his eyes, he saw a monkey squatting beside him. When King opened his eyes the animal leaped nimbly away, and then the American saw that there were several monkeys in the chamber. They were quite the largest that he had seen in the jungle, and in his helpless condition he knew that they might constitute a real menace to his life. But they did not attack him, nor did they come close to him again; and it soon became evident that their visit was prompted solely by curiosity.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

A little later he heard a scraping sound behind him in one corner of the chamber. Having regained his strength during the past few days sufficiently to be able to move his head and hands with comparative ease, he turned his head to see what was going on. The sight that met his eyes would have been highly amusing had it not been fraught with the possibility of such unhappy results.

The monkeys had discovered his weapons and his clothing. All had congregated at the point of interest. They were dragging the things about and chattering excitedly. They seemed to be quarrelling about something; and their chattering and scolding rose in volume until finally one old fellow, who was apparently contesting possession of the rifle with two others, leaped angrily upon them, growling and biting. Instantly the other two relinquished their holds upon the firearm and scurried to a far corner of the chamber; whereupon the victor seized the weapon again and dragged it toward the doorway.

"Hey!" shouted King in the loudest voice he could muster. "Drop that; and get out of here!"

The sound of the human voice seemed to startle the monkeys, but not sufficiently to cause them to relinquish the purpose they had in mind. It is true that they scampered from the chamber, but they gathered up all of King's belongings and took them with them, even to his socks.

King shouted to the boy whom he had heard the parents address as Uda; but when at last the little chap came, breathless and frightened, it was too late to avert or remedy the catastrophe, even if King had been able to explain to Uda what had happened.

The night when she returned, Kangrey found her patient very weak, but she did not guess the cause of it since she could not know that in the mind of the pale one was implanted the conviction that his only hope for eventual escape from the jungle had lain in the protection that the stolen weapons would have afforded him.

The days and nights wore slowly on as gradual convalescence brought returning strength to the sick man. To while away the tedious hours he sought to learn the language of his benefactors; and when, finally, they understood his wish they entered with such spirit into its consummation that he found himself deluged with such a variety of new words that his mind became fogged with information. But eventually some order and understanding came out of the chaos, so that presently he was able to converse with Che and Kangrey and Uda. Thereafter his existence was far less monotonous; but his slow recovery irked and worried him, for it seemed impossible that his strength ever would return. He was so emaciated that it was well for his peace of mind that he had no access to any mirrors.

Yet surely though slowly, his strength was returning. From sitting up with his back against the wall he came at length to standing upon his feet once more; and though he was weak and tottering, it was a beginning; and each day now he found his strength returning more rapidly.

From talking with Che and Kangrey, King had learned the details of the simple life they led. Che was a hunter. Some days he brought back nothing, but as a rule he did not return without adding to the simple larder. The flesh was usually that of a monkey or bird or one of the small rodents that lived in the jungle. Fish he brought, too, and fruit and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

vegetables and sometimes wild honey.

Che and Kangrey and Uda were equally proficient in making fires with a primitive fire stick, which they twirled between the palms of their hands. Kangrey possessed a single pot in which all food was cooked. It was a brass pot, the inside of which she kept scrupulously polished, using earth and leaves for this purpose.

Che was, indeed, a primitive hunter, armed with a spear, bow and arrows, and a knife. When King explained to him the merits of the firearms that had been stolen by the monkeys, Che sympathised with his guest in their loss; but he promised to equip King with new weapons such as he himself carried; and King expressed his gratitude to the native, though he could not arouse within himself much enthusiasm at the prospect of facing a long trip through this tiger-infested forest armed only with the crude weapons of primitive man, even were he skilled in their use.

As King's strength had returned, he had tried to keep together in his mind the happenings that had immediately preceded his illness, but he always felt that the old man with the yellow cloak and the red parasol and the charging tiger that had fallen to a single shot were figments of a fever-tortured brain. He had never spoken to Che and Kangrey about the hallucination because it seemed silly to do so; yet he found its memory persisting in his mind as a reality rather than an hallucination, so that at last, one evening, he determined to broach the subject, approaching it in a roundabout way.

"Che," he said, "you have lived in the jungle a long while, have you not?"

"Yes," replied the native. "For five years I was a slave in Lodidhapura, but then I escaped, and all the rest of my life I have spent in the jungle."

"Did you ever see an old man wandering in the jungle," continued King, "an old man who wore a long yellow cloak and carried a red parasol?"

"Of course," replied Che, "and you saw him, too. It was Vay Thon, whom you saved from the charge of My Lord the Tiger."

King looked at the native in open-mouthed astonishment. "Have you had a touch of fever too, Che?" he asked "No," replied the native. "Che is a strong man; he is never ill."

"No," Kangrey said proudly. "Che is a very strong man. In all the years that I have known him, he has never been ill."

"Did you see this old man with the yellow cloak and the red parasol, Kangrey?" asked King, sceptically.

"Of course I did. Why do you ask?" inquired the woman.

"And you saw me kill the tiger?" demanded the American.

"I did not see you kill him; but I heard a great noise, and I saw him after he had died. There was a little round hole just behind his left ear; and when Che cut him open to see why he died, he found a piece of metal in his brain, the same metal that the walls of the palace of Lodivarman are covered with."

"That is lead," said Che with an air of superiority.

"Then you mean to tell me that this old man and the tiger were real?" demanded King.

"What do you think they were?" asked Che.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I thought they were of the same stuff as were the other dreams that the fever brought into my brain," replied King.

"No," said Che, "they were not dreams. They were real. And it was good for you and for me and for Vay Thon that you killed the tiger, though how you did it neither Vay Thon nor I can understand."

"It was certainly good for Vay Thon," said King.

"And good for you and for me," insisted Che.

"Why was it so good for us?" asked the American.

"Vay Thon is the high priest of Siva in the city of Lodidhapura. He is very powerful. Only Lodivarman, the King, is more powerful. Vay Thon had wandered far from the city immersed in deep thought. He did not know where he was. He did not know how to return to Lodidhapura. Kangrey and I are runaway slaves of Lodidhapura. Had we been discovered before this happened, we should have been killed; but Vay Thon promised us our freedom if I would lead him back to the city. In gratitude to you for having saved his life he charged Kangrey and me to nurse you back to health and to take care of you. So you see it was good for all of us that you killed the tiger that would have killed Vay Thon."

"And you would not have nursed me back to health, Che, had Vay Thon not exacted the promise from you?" inquired King.

"We are runaway slaves," said the native. "We fear all men, or until Vay Thon promised us our freedom, we did fear all men; and it would have been safer for us to let you die, since you were unknown to us and might have carried word to the soldiers of Lodidhapura and led them to our hiding-place."

For a time King remained in silent thought, wondering, in view of what he had just heard, where the dividing line had lain between reality and hallucination. "Perhaps, then," he said with a smile, "the weeping queen on the misty elephant and the many soldiers in cuirasses of polished brass were real too."

"You saw those?" asked Che.

"Yes," replied King.

"When and where?" demanded the native excitedly.

"It could not have been very long before I saw the high priest and the tiger."

"They are getting close," said Che nervously to Kangrey. "We must search for another hiding-place."

"You forget the promise of Vay Thon," Kangrey reminded him. "We are free now; we are no longer slaves."

"I had forgotten," said Che. "I am not yet accustomed to freedom, and perhaps I think, too, that possibly Vay Thon may forget."

"I do not think so," said the woman. "Lodivarman might forget, but not Vay Thon, for Vay Thon is a good man. Every one in Lodidhapura said so."

"You really believe that I saw an elephant, a queen, and soldiers?" demanded King.

"Why not?" asked Che.

"There are such things in the jungle?" inquired the young man.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Of course," said Kangrey.

"And this city of Lodidhapura?" demanded King. "I have never heard of it before. Is that close beside the jungle?"

"It is in the jungle," said Che.

King shook his head. "It is strange," he said. "I wandered through the jungle for days and never saw signs of a human being or a human habitation."

"There are many things in the jungle which men do not always see," replied Che. "There are the Nagas and the Yeacks. You may be glad that you did not see them."

"What are the Nagas and the Yeacks?" asked King.

"The Nagas are the Cobra people," replied Che. "They live in a great palace upon a mountain and are very powerful. They have seven heads and can change themselves into any form of creature that they desire. They are workers of magic. It is said that Lodivarman's principal wife is the queen of the Nagas and that she changed herself into the form of a beautiful woman that she might rule directly over the mortals as well as the gods. But I do not believe that, because no one, not even a Naga, would choose to be the queen of a leper. But the Yeacks are most to be feared because they do not live far away upon a mountain-top, but are everywhere in the jungle."

"What are they like?" asked King.

"They are horrible Ogres who live upon human flesh," replied Che.

"Have you ever seen them?" asked King.

"Of course not," replied the native. "Only he who is about to be devoured sees them."

Gordon King listened with polite attention to the folk tales of Che and Kangrey, but he knew that they were only legends of a kind with the fabulous city of Lodidhapura and its Leper King, Lodivarman. He was somewhat at a loss to account for Vay Thon, the high priest, but he decided finally that the old man was an eccentric hermit who had come into the jungle to live and that to him might be attributed many of the fabulous tales that Che and Kangrey narrated so glibly. That his two friends were runaway slaves from the fabulous city of Lodidhapura, King doubted, attributing their story to the desire of primitive minds to inject a strain of romance into their otherwise monotonous lives.

As King's strength returned rapidly, he insisted more and more upon getting out into the open. He was anxious to accompany Che upon his hunting trips, but the native insisted that he was not yet sufficiently strong. So the American had to content himself with remaining with Kangrey and Uda at home, where he practised using the weapons that Che had made for him, which consisted of a bow and arrow and a short, heavy javelin-like spear. Thanks to the training of his college days, King was proficient in the use of the latter; and he practised assiduously with his bow and arrows until his marksmanship aroused the admiring applause of even Kangrey, who considered Che the best bowman in the world, to whose expert proficiency no other mortal might hope to attain.

The dwelling of Che and Kangrey and Uda was in an ancient Khmer ruin and consisted of a small room which had withstood the march of the centuries—a room that was peculiarly suited to the requirements of the little jungle family since it had but a single entrance, a small aperture that could be effectually blocked at night with a flat slab of stone against the depredations of marauding cats.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Their existence was as simple and primitive as might have been that of the first man; yet there was inherent in it an undeniable charm that King felt in spite of the monotony and his anxiety to escape from the jungle.

Che knew nothing but the jungle and the fabulous city of Lodidhapura. It is difficult for us to conceive of an endless infinity of space, but Che could imagine an endless jungle. The question of limitation did not enter his mind and, therefore, did not confuse him. To him, the world was a jungle. When King realised this, he knew, too, that it was hopeless to expect Che to attempt to lead him out of a jungle that he believed had no end.

For some time King had been making short excursions into the jungle in search of game while he repeatedly sought to impress upon Che that he was strong enough to accompany the native upon his hunts; but he was met with so many excuses that he at last awoke to the fact that Che did not want him along; and so the American determined to set out by himself upon a prolonged and determined effort to prove his efficiency. He left one morning after Che had departed, turning his steps in a different direction from that taken by the native. He was determined to bring back something to demonstrate his prowess to Che, but though he moved silently through the jungle, keeping the sharpest look out, he saw no sign of game of any description; and having had past experience of the ease with which one might become lost in the jungle, he turned back at last empty-handed.

During his long convalescence King had had an opportunity to consider many things, and one of them had been his humiliating lack of jungle craft. He knew, therefore, that he must mark the trail in some way if he were to hope to return to the dwelling of Che and Kangrey. He could not blaze the trees with his knife on a hunting excursion since the noise would unquestionably frighten away the game, and so he invented several other ways of marking the trail—sticking twigs in the rough bark of trees that he passed, scraping the ground with the sharp point of his javelin, and placing three twigs in the form of an arrow, pointing backward along the trail over which he had come. Accordingly, he had little difficulty to-day in backtracking along the way to the home of Che.

Practising jungle craft necessitated moving as noiselessly as possible, and so it was that he came as silently as might a hunting cat to the edge of the ruin where lay the dwelling of his friend. As King came within sight of the familiar entrance, a scene met his eyes that froze his blood and brought his heart into his throat. In the small clearing that Che had made, little Uda was at play. He was digging with a sharp stick in the leafy mould of the ground, while watching him at the edge of the clearing crouched a great panther.

King saw the beast gradually drawing its hind feet well beneath its body as it prepared to charge.

Returning early from a successful hunt, Che approached the clearing. He, too, moved silently, for thus he always moved through the jungle. Along a forest aisle he could see the clearing before he reached it. He saw Uda digging among the dry leaves, which made a rustling sound that would have drowned the noise of the approach of even a less careful jungle animal than Che. The father smiled as his eyes rested upon his first-born, but in the same instant the smile froze to an expression of horror as he saw a panther leap into the clearing.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Kangrey, emerging at that moment from their gloomy dwelling, saw it too, and screamed as she rushed forward barehanded, impelled by the mother instinct to protect its young. And then, all in the same brief instant, Che saw a heavy javelin streak lightning-like from the jungle. He saw the panther crumple in its charge, and as he ran forward he saw the pale one leap into the clearing and snatch Uda into his arms.

Che, realising, as had King, the fury of a wounded panther, rushed upon the scene with ready spear as the pale one tossed Uda to Kangrey and turned again to face the great cat. But there was no necessity for the vicious thrust with which Che drove his spear into the carcass of the beast, for the panther was already dead.

For a moment they stood in silence, looking down upon the kill—four primitive jungle people, naked but for sampots. It was King's first experience of a thrill of the primitive hunter. He trembled a little, but that was reaction to the fear that he had felt for the life of little Uda.

"It is a large panther," said Che simply.

"Only a strong man could have slain it thus," said Kangrey. "Only Che could thus have slain with a single cast so great a panther."

"It was not the spear of Che. It was the spear of the pale one that laid low the prince of darkness," said Che.

Kangrey looked her astonishment and would not be convinced until she had examined the spear that protruded from beneath the left shoulder of the great cat. "This, then, is the reward that Vay Thon said would be ours if we befriended the pale one," she declared.

Uda said nothing, but, squirming from his mother's arms, he ran to the side of the dead panther and belaboured it with his little stick.

The next day Che invited King to accompany him upon his hunt. When after a hard day they returned empty-handed, King was convinced that in the search for small game a lone hunter would have greater chances for success. In the morning, therefore, he announced that he would hunt alone in another part of the jungle, and Che agreed with him that this plan would be better.

Marking his trail as he had before, King hunted an unfamiliar territory. The forest appeared more open. There was less underbrush; and he had discovered what appeared to be a broad elephant trail, along which he moved with far greater speed than he had ever been able to attain before in his wanderings through this empire of trees and underbrush.

He had no luck in his hunting; and when he had about determined that it was time to turn back, his ears caught an unfamiliar sound. What it was he did not know. There was a peculiar metallic ring and other sounds that might have been human voices at a distance.

"Perhaps," soliloquised King, "I am about to see the Nagas or the Yeacks."

The sound was steadily approaching; and as he had learned enough from his intercourse with Che and Kangrey to know that no friendly creatures might be encountered in the jungle, he drew to one side of the elephant trail and concealed himself behind some shrubbery.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

He had not waited long when he saw the authors of the sounds approaching. Suddenly he felt his head. It did not seem over-hot. As he had upon other similar occasions, he closed his eyes tightly and then opened them again, but still the vision persisted—a vision of brown-skinned soldiers in burnished brass cuirasses over leather jerkins that fell midway between their hips and their knees, with heavy sandals on their feet, strange helmets on their heads, and armed with swords and spears and bows and arrows.

They came on talking among themselves, and as they passed close to King he discovered that they spoke the same language that he had learned from Che and Kangrey. Evidently the men were arguing with their leader, who wanted to go on, while the majority of his followers seemed in favour of turning back.

“We shall have to spend the night in the jungle as it is,” said one. “If we go on much farther, we shall have to spend two nights in the jungle. Only a fool would choose to lair with My Lord the Tiger.”

They had stopped now almost opposite King, so that he could clearly overhear all that passed between them. The man in charge appeared to be a petty officer with little real authority, for instead of issuing orders he argued and pleaded.

“It is well enough for you to insist upon turning back,” he said, “since if we return to the city without the apsaras you expect that I alone shall be punished; but let me tell you that, if you force me to turn back, the entire truth will be made known and you will share in any punishment that may be inflicted upon me.”

“If we cannot find her, we cannot find her,” grumbled one of the men. “Are we to remain in the jungle the rest of our lives searching for a runaway apsaras?”

“I would as lief face My Lord the Tiger in the jungle for the rest of my life,” replied the petty officer, “as face Lodivarman if we return without the girl.”

“What Vama says is true,” said another. “Lodivarman, the King, will not be interested in our reason for returning empty-handed. Should we return to the city to-morrow without the girl and Vama charged that we had forced him to turn back, Lodivarman, if he were in ill-humour, as he usually is, would have us all put to death; but if we remain away for many days and then return with a story of many hardships and dangers he will know that we did all that might be expected of brave warriors, and thus the anger of Lodivarman might be assuaged.”

“At last,” commented Vama, “you are commencing to talk like intelligent and civilised men. Come, now, and let us resume the search.”

As they moved away King heard one of the men suggest that they find a safe and comfortable camp site where they might remain for a sufficient length of time to impress upon the King the verity of the story that they would relate to him. He waited only until they were out of sight before he arose from his place of concealment, for he was much concerned with the fact that they were proceeding in the general direction of the dwelling of Che and Kangrey. King was much mystified by what he had seen. He knew that these soldiers were no children of a fevered brain. They were flesh and blood warriors and for that reason a far greater mystery than any of the creatures he had seen in his delirium, since they could not be accounted for by any process of intelligent reasoning. His judgment told him that there were no warriors in this uninhabited jungle and cer-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tainly none with the archaic accoutrements and weapons that he had seen. It might be reasonable to expect to meet such types in an extravaganza of the stage or screen; and, doubtless, centuries ago warriors such as these patrolled this very spot which the jungle and the tiger and the elephant had long since reclaimed.

He recalled the stories that his guide had told him of the ghosts of the ancient Khmers, which roamed through the sombre aisles of the forest. He remembered the other soldiers that he had seen and the girl with the frightened eyes that rode upon the great elephant, and the final result was a questioning of his own sanity. Since he knew that a fever, such as the one through which he had passed, might easily affect one's brain either temporarily or permanently, he was troubled and not a little frightened as he made his way in the direction of the dwelling of Che and Kangrey. But the fact that he took a circuitous route that he might avoid the warriors indicated that either he was quite crazy or, at least, that he was temporising with his madness.

“‘Weeping queens on misty elephants!’” he soliloquised. “‘Warriors in brass!’ ‘A mystery of the Orient.’ Perhaps after all there are ghosts. There has been enough evidence accumulated during historic times to prove that the materialisation of disembodied spirits may have occurred upon countless occasions. That I never saw a ghost is not necessarily conclusive evidence that they do not exist. There are many strange things in the Orient that the western mind cannot grasp. Perhaps, after all, I have seen ghosts; but if so, they certainly were thoroughly materialised, even to the dirt on their legs and the sweat on their faces. I suppose I shall have to admit that they are ghosts, since I know that no soldiers like them exist in the flesh anywhere in the world.”

As King moved silently through the jungle, he presented an even more anachronistic figure than had the soldiers in brass; for they, at least, personified an era of civilisation and advancement, while King, to all outward appearances, was almost at the dawn of human evolution—a primitive hunter, naked but for a sampot of leopard skin and rude sandals fashioned by Kangrey because the soles of his feet, innocent of the callouses that shod hers and Che's, had rendered him almost helpless in the jungle without this protection. His skin was brown from exposure to the sun, and his hair had grown thick and shaggy. That he was smooth-shaven was the result of chance. He had always made it a habit, since he had taken up the study of medicine and surgery, to carry a safety razor blade with him, for what possible emergency he could not himself have explained. It was merely an idiosyncrasy, and it had so chanced that among several other things that the monkeys had dropped from his pockets and scattered in the jungle the razor blade had been recovered by little Uda along with a silver pencil and a handful of French francs.

He moved through the jungle with all the assurance of a man who has known no other life, so quickly does humankind adapt itself to environment. Already his ears and his nostrils had become inured to their surroundings to such an extent, at least, as to permit them to identify and classify easily and quickly the more familiar sounds and odours of the jungle. Familiarity had induced increasing self-assurance, which had now reached a point that made him feel he might soon safely set out in search of civilisation. However, today his mind was not on this thing; it was still engaged in an endeavour to solve the puzzle of the brass-bound warriors. But presently the baffling contemplation of this matter was rudely interrupted by a patch of buff coat and black stripes of which he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

caught a momentary, fleeting glimpse between the boles of two trees ahead of him.

A species of unreasoning terror that had formerly seized him each time that he had glimpsed the terrifying lord of the jungle had gradually passed away as he had come to recognise the fact that every tiger that he saw was not bent upon his destruction and that nine times out of ten it would try to get out of his way. Of course, it is the tenth tiger that one must always reckon with; but where trees are numerous and a man's eyes and ears and nose are alert, even the tenth tiger may usually be circumvented.

So now King did not alter his course, though he had seen the tiger directly ahead of him. It would be time enough to think of retreat when he found that the temper and intentions of the tiger warranted it, and, further, it was better to keep the brute in sight than to feel that perhaps he had circled and was creeping up behind one. It was, therefore, because of this that King pushed on a little more rapidly; and soon he was rewarded by another glimpse of the great carnivore and of something else, which presented a tableau that froze his blood.

Beyond the tiger and facing it stood a girl. Her wide eyes were glassy with terror. She stood as one in a trance, frozen to the spot, while toward her the great cat crept. She was a slender girl, garbed as fantastically as had been the soldiers that had passed him in the jungle shortly before; but her gorgeous garments were soiled and torn, and even at a distance King could see that her face and arms were scratched and bleeding. In the instant that his eyes alighted upon her he sensed something strangely familiar about her. It was a sudden, wholly unaccountable impression that somewhere he had seen this girl before; but it was only a passing impression, for his whole mind now was occupied with her terrifying predicament.

To save her from the terrible death creeping slowly upon her seemed beyond the realms of possibility, and yet King knew that he must make the attempt. He recognised instantly that his only hope lay in distracting the attention of the tiger. If he could centre the interest of the brute upon himself, perhaps the girl might escape.

He shouted, and the tiger wheeled about. "Run!" he cried to the girl. "Quick! Make for a tree!"

As he spoke, King was running forward. His heavy spear was ready in his hand, but yet it was a mad chance to take. Perhaps he forgot himself and his own danger, thinking only of the girl. The tiger glanced back at the girl, who, obeying King's direction, had run quickly to a nearby tree into which she was trying to scramble, badly hampered by the long skirt that enveloped her.

For only an instant did the tiger hesitate. His short and ugly temper was fully aroused now in the face of this rude interruption of his plan. With a savage snarl and then the short coughing roars with which King was all too familiar, he wheeled and sprang toward the man in long, easy bounds. Twelve to fifteen feet he covered in a single leap. Flight was futile. There was nothing that King could do but stand his ground and pit his puny spear against this awful engine of destruction.

In that brief instant there was pictured upon the screen of his memory a tree-girt athletic field. He saw young men in shirts and shorts throwing javelins. He saw himself among them. It was his turn now. His arm went back. He recalled how he had put every

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ounce of muscle, weight, and science into that throw. He recalled the friendly congratulations that followed it, for every one knew without waiting for the official verdict that he had broken a world's record.

Again his arm flew back. To-day there was more at stake than a world's record, but the man did not lose his nerve. Timed to the fraction of an instant, backed by the last ounce of his weight and his skill and his great strength, the spear met the tiger in mid-leap; full in the chest it struck him. King leaped to one side and ran for a tree, his single, frail hope lying in the possibility that the great beast might be even momentarily disabled.

He did not waste the energy or the time even to glance behind him. If the tiger were able to overtake him, it must be totally a matter of indifference to King whether the great brute seized him from behind or in front—he had led his ace and he did not have another.

No fangs or talons rent his flesh as King scrambled to the safety of the nearest tree. It was not without a sense of considerable surprise that he found himself safely ensconced in his leafy sanctuary, for from the instant that the tiger had turned upon him in its venomous charge he had counted himself already as good as dead.

Now that he had an opportunity to look about him, he saw the tiger struggling in its death throes upon the very spot where it had anticipated wreaking its vengeance upon the rash man-thing that had dared to question its right to the possession of its intended prey; and a little to the right of the dying beast the American saw the girl crouching in the branches of a tree. Together they watched the death throes of the great cat; and when at last the man was convinced that the beast was dead, he leaped lightly to the ground and approached the tree among the branches of which the girl had sought safety.

That she was still filled with terror was apparent in the strained and frightened expression upon her face. "Go away!" she cried. "The soldiers of Lodivarman, the King, are here; and if you harm me they will kill you."

King smiled. "You are inconsistent," he said, "in invoking the protection of the soldiers from whom you are trying to escape; but you need not fear me. I shall not harm you."

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"I am a hunter who dwells in the jungle," replied King. "I am the protector of high priests and weeping queens, or so, at least, I seem to be."

"High priests? Weeping queens? What do you mean?"

"I have saved Vay Thon, the high priest, from My Lord the Tiger," replied King; "and now I have saved you."

"But I am no queen and I am not weeping," replied the girl.

"Do not disillusion me," insisted King. "I contend that you are a queen, whether you weep or smile. I should not be surprised to learn that you are the queen of the Nagas. Nothing would surprise me in this jungle of anachronism, hallucination, and impossibility."

"Help me down from the tree," said the girl. "Perhaps you are mad, but you seem quite harmless."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Be assured, your majesty, that I shall not harm you," replied King, "for presently I am sure there will emerge from nowhere ten thousand elephants and a hundred thousand warriors in shining brass to succour and defend you. Nothing seems impossible after what I have witnessed; but come, let me touch you; let me assure myself that I am not again the victim of a pernicious fever."

"May Siva, who protected me from My Lord the Tiger a moment ago, protect me also from this madman!"

"Pardon me," said King. "I did not catch what you said."

"I am afraid," said the girl.

"You need not be afraid of me," King assured her; "and if you want your soldiers I believe that I can find them for you; but if I am not mistaken, I believe that you are more afraid of them than you are of me."

"What do you know of that?" demanded she.

"I overheard their conversation while they halted near me," replied the American, "and I learned that they are hunting for you to take you back to someone from whom you escaped. Come, I will help you down. You may trust me."

He raised his hands toward her, and after a moment's hesitation she slipped into his arms and he lowered her to the ground.

"I must trust you," she said. "There is no other way, for I could not remain for ever in the tree; and then, too, even though you seem mad there is something about you that makes me feel that I am safe with you."

As he felt her soft, lithe body momentarily in his arms, King knew that this was no tenuous spirit of a dream. For an instant her small hand touched his shoulder, her warm breath fanned his cheek, and her firm, young breasts were pressed against his naked body. Then she stepped back and surveyed him.

"What manner of man are you?" she demanded. "You are neither Khmer nor slave. Your colour is not the colour of any man that I have ever seen, nor are your features those of the people of my race. Perhaps you are a reincarnation of one of those ancients of whom our legends tell us; or perhaps you are a Naga who has taken the form of man for some dire purpose of your own."

"Perhaps I am a Yeack," suggested King.

"No," she said quite seriously, "I am sure you are not a Yeack, for it is reported that they are most hideous, while you, though not like any man I have ever seen, are handsome."

"I am neither Yeack nor Naga," replied King.

"Then perhaps you are from Lodidhapura—one of the creatures of Lodivarman."

"No," replied the man. "I have never been to Lodidhapura. I have never seen the King, Lodivarman, and, as a matter of fact, I have always doubted their existence."

The girl's dark eyes regarded him steadily. "I cannot believe that," she said, "for it is unconceivable that there should be anyone in the world who has not heard of Lodidhapura and Lodivarman."

"I come from a far country," explained King, "where there are millions of people

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

who never heard of the Khmers."

"Impossible!" she cried.

"But nevertheless quite true," he insisted.

"From what country do you come?" she asked.

"From America."

"I never heard of such a country."

"Then you should be able to understand that I may never have heard of Lodidhapura," said the man.

For a moment the girl was silent, evidently pondering the logic of his statement. "Perhaps you are right," she said finally. "It may be that there are other cities within the jungle of which we have never heard. But tell me—you risked your life to save mine—why did you do that?"

"What else might I have done?" he asked.

"You might have run away and saved yourself."

King smiled, but he made no reply. He was wondering if there existed any man who could have run away and left one so beautiful and so helpless to the mercies of My Lord the Tiger.

"You are very brave," she continued presently. "What is your name?"

"Gordon King."

"Gordon King," she repeated in a soft, caressing voice. "That is a nice name, but it is not like any name that I have heard before."

"And what is your name?" asked King.

"I am called Fou-tan," she said, and she eyed him intently, as though she would note if the name made any impression upon him.

King thought Fou-tan a pretty name, but it seemed banal to say so. He was appraising her small, delicate features, her beautiful eyes and her soft brown skin. They recalled to him the weeping queen upon the misty elephant that he had seen in his delirium, and once again there arose within him doubts as to his sanity. "Tell me," he said suddenly. "Did you ever ride through the jungle on a great elephant escorted by soldiers in brass?"

"Yes," she said.

"And you say that you are from Lodidhapura?" he continued.

"I have just come from there," she replied.

"Did you ever hear of a priest called Vay Thon?"

"He is the high priest of Siva in the city of Lodidhapura," she replied.

King shook his head in perplexity. "It is hard to know," he murmured, "where dreams end and reality begins."

"I do not understand you," she said, her brows knit in perplexity.

"Perhaps I do not understand myself," he admitted.

"You are a strange man," said Fou-tan. "I do not know whether to fear you or trust you. You are not like any other man I have ever known. What do you intend to do with

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

me?"

"Perhaps I had better take you back to the dwelling of Che and Kangrey," he said, "and then to-morrow Che can guide you back to Lodidhapura."

"But I do not wish to return to Lodidhapura," said the girl.

"Why not?" demanded King.

"Listen, Gordon King, and I shall tell you," said Fou-tan.

"Let us sit down upon this fallen tree," said Foutan, "and I shall tell you why I do not wish to return to Lodidhapura."

As they seated themselves, King became acutely conscious of the marked physical attraction that this girl of a forgotten age exercised over him. Every movement of her lithe body, every gesture of her graceful arms and hands, each changing expression of her beautiful face and eyes were provocative. She radiated magnetism. He sensed it in the reaction of his skin, his eyes, his nostrils. It was as though ages of careful selection had produced her for the purpose of arousing in man the desire of possession, and yet there enveloped her a divine halo of chastity that aroused within his breast the protective instinct that governs the attitude of a normal man toward a woman that Fate has thrown into his keeping. Never in his life had King been similarly attracted to any woman.

"Why do you look at me so?" she inquired suddenly.

"Forgive me," said King simply. "Go on with your story."

"I am from Pnom Dhek," said Fou-tan, "where Beng Kher is king. Pnom Dhek is a greater city than Lodidhapura; Beng Kher is a mightier king than Lodivarman."

"Bharata Rahon desired me. He wished to take me to wife. I pleaded with my father the—I pleaded with my father not to give me in marriage to Bharata Rahon; but he told me that I did not know my own mind, that I only thought that I did not like Bharata Rahon, that he would make me a good husband, and that after we were married I should be happy.

"I knew that I must do something to convince my father that my mind and soul sincerely revolted at the thought of mating with Bharata Rahon, and so I conceived the idea of running away and going out into the jungle that I might prove that I preferred death to the man my father had chosen for me.

"I did not want to die. I wanted them to come and find me very quickly, and when night came I was terrified. I climbed into a tree where I crouched in terror. I heard My Lord the Tiger pass beneath in the darkness of the night, and my fear was so great that I thought that I should faint and fall into his clutches; yet when day came again I was still convinced that I would rather lie in the arms of My Lord the Tiger than in those of Bharata Rahon, who is a loathsome man whose very name I detest.

"Yet I moved back in the direction of Pnom Dhek, or rather I thought that I did, though now I am certain that I went in the opposite direction. I hoped that searchers sent out by my father would find me, for I did not wish to return of my own volition to Pnom Dhek.

"The day dragged on and I met no searchers, and once again I became terrified, for I knew that I was lost in the jungle. Then I heard the heavy tread of an elephant and the clank of arms and men's voices, and I was filled with relief and gratitude, for I thought at

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

last that the searchers were about to find me.

"But when the warriors came within view, I saw that they wore the armour of Lodivarman. I was terrified and tried to escape them, but they had seen me and they pursued me. Easily they overtook me, and great was their joy when they looked upon me.

"'Lodivarman will reward us handsomely,' they cried, 'when he sees that which we have brought to him from Pnom Dhek.'

"So they placed me in the howdah upon the elephant's back and took me through the jungle to Lodidhapura, where I was immediately taken into the presence of Lodivarman.

"Oh, Gordon King, that was a terrible moment. I was terrified when I found myself so close to the leper king of Lodidhapura. He is covered with great sores, where leprosy is devouring him. That day he was ugly and indifferent. He scarcely looked at me, but ordered that I should be taken to the quarters of the apsaras, and so I became a dancing girl at the court of the leper king.

"Not in a thousand years, Gordon King, could I explain to you what I suffered each time that we came before Lodivarman to dance. Each sore upon his repulsive body seemed to reach out to seize and contaminate me. It was with the utmost difficulty that, half fainting, I went through the ritual of the dance.

"I tried to hide my face from him, for I knew that I was beautiful and I knew the fate of beautiful women in the court of Lodivarman.

"But at last, one day, I realised that he had noticed me. I saw his dead eyes following me about.

We were dancing in the great hall where he holds his court. Lodivarman was seated upon his throne. The lead-covered walls of the great apartment were gorgeous with paintings and with hangings. Beneath our feet were the polished flagstones of the floor, but they seemed softer to me than the heart of Lodivarman.

"At last the dance was done, and we were permitted to retire to our apartments. Presently there came to me a captain of the King's household, resplendent in his gorgeous trappings.

"'The King has looked upon you,' said he, 'and would honour you as befits your beauty.'

"'It is sufficient honour,' I replied, 'to dance in the palace of Lodivarman.'

"'You are about to receive a more signal manifestation of the King's honour,' he replied.

"'I am satisfied as I am,' I said.

"'It is not for you to choose, Fou-tan,' replied the messenger. 'The King has chosen you as his newest concubine. Rejoice, therefore, in the knowledge that some day you may become queen.'

"I could have fainted at the very horror of the suggestion. What could I do? I must gain time. I thought of suicide, but I am young, and I do not wish to die. 'When must I come?' I asked.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

“‘You will be given time to prepare yourself,’ replied the messenger. ‘For three days the women will bathe and anoint your body, and upon the fourth day you will be conducted to the King.’

“Four days! In four days I must find some way in which to escape the horrid fate to which my beauty had condemned me. ‘Go!’ I said. ‘Leave me in peace for the four days that remain to me of even a semblance of happiness in life.’

“The messenger, grinning, withdrew, and I threw myself upon my pallet and burst into tears. That night the apsaras were to dance in the moonlight in the courtyard before the temple of Siva; and though they would have insisted that my preparation for the honour that was to be bestowed upon me should commence at once, I begged that I might once more, and for the last time, join with my companions in honouring Siva, the Destroyer.

“It was a dark night. The flares that illumined the courtyard cast a wavering light in which exaggerated shadows of the apsaras danced grotesquely. In the dance I wore a mask, and my position was at the extreme left of the last line of apsaras. I was close to the line of spectators that encircled the courtyard, and in some of the movements of the dance I came quite close enough to touch them. This was what I had hoped for.

“All the tune that I was dancing I was perfecting in my mind the details of a plan that had occurred to me earlier in the day. The intricate series of postures and steps, with which I had been familiar since childhood, required of me but little mental concentration. I went through them mechanically, my thoughts wholly centred upon the mad scheme that I had conceived. I knew that at one point in the dance the attention of all the spectators would be focused upon a single apsaras, whose position was in the centre of the first line, and when this moment arrived I stepped quickly into the line of spectators.

“Those in my immediate vicinity noticed me, but to these I explained that I was ill and was making my way back to the temple. A little awed by my close presence, they let me pass unmolested, for in the estimation of the people the persons of the apsaras are almost holy.

“Behind the last line of the audience rose a low wall that surrounds the temple courtyard. Surmounting it at intervals rise the beautifully carved stone figures of the seven-headed cobra—emblem of the Royal Nagas. Deep were the shadows between them; and while all eyes were fixed upon the leading apsaras, I clambered quickly to the top of the low wall, where for a moment I hid in the shadow of a great Naga. Below me, black, mysterious, terrifying, lay the dark waters of the moat, beneath the surface of which lived the crocodiles placed there by the King to guard the Holy of Holies. Upon the opposite side the level of the water was but a few inches below the surface of the broad avenue that leads to the stables where the King’s elephants are kept. The avenues were deserted, for all who dwelt within the walls of the royal enclosure were watching the dance of the apsaras.

“To Brahma, to Vishnu, and to Siva I breathed a prayer, and then I slid as quietly as possible down into the terrifying waters of the moat. Quickly I struck out for the opposite side, every instant expecting to feel the hideous jaws of a crocodile close upon me; but my prayers had been heard, and I reached the avenue in safety.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I was forced to climb two more walls before I could escape from the royal enclosure and from the city. My wet and bedraggled costume was torn, and my hands and face were scratched and bleeding before I succeeded.

"At last I was in the jungle, confronted by danger more deadly, yet far less horrible, than that from which I had escaped. How I survived that night and this day I do not know. And now the end would have come but for you, Gordon King."

As King gazed at the sensitive face and delicately moulded figure of the girl beside him, he marvelled at the courage and strength of will, seemingly so out of proportion to the frail temple that housed them, that had sustained her in the conception and execution of an adventure that might have taxed the courage and stamina of a warrior. "You are a brave girl, Fou-tan," he said.

"The daughter of my father could not be less," she replied simply.

"You are a daughter of whom any father might be proud," said King, "but if we are to save you for him we had better be thinking about getting to the dwelling of Che and Kangrey before night falls."

"Who are these people?" asked Fou-tan. "Perhaps they will return me to Lodidhapura for the reward that Lodivarman will pay."

"You need have no fear on that score," replied King. "They are honest people, runaway slaves from Lodidhapura. They have been kind to me, and they will be kind to you."

"And if they are not, you will protect me," said Fou-tan with a tone of finality that evidenced the confidence which she already felt in the dependability and integrity of her newfound friend.

As they set out in the direction of Che's dwelling, it became apparent to King immediately that Fou-tan was tired almost to the point of exhaustion. Will-power and nerve had sustained her so far; but now, with the discovery of someone to whom she might transfer the responsibility of her safety, the reaction had come; and he often found it necessary to assist and support her over the rough places of the trail. She was small and light, and where the going was exceptionally bad he lifted her in his arms and carried her as he might have a child.

"You are strong, Gordon King," she said once as he carried her thus. Her soft arms were around his neck, her lips were very close to his.

"I must need be strong," he said. But if she sensed his meaning she gave no evidence of it. Her eyes closed wearily and her little head dropped to his shoulder. He carried her thus for a long way, though the trail beneath his feet was smooth and hard.

Vama and his warriors had halted in a little glade where there was water. While two of them hunted in the forest for meat for their supper, the others lay stretched out upon the ground in that silence which is induced by hunger and fatigue. Presently Vama sat up alert. His ears had caught the sound of the approach of something through the jungle.

"Kau and Tchek are returning from the hunt," whispered one of the warriors who lay near him and who, also, had heard the noise.

"They did not go in that direction," replied Vama in a low tone. Then signalling his warriors to silence, he ordered them to conceal themselves from view.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The sound, already close when they had first heard it, approached steadily; and they did not have long to wait ere a warrior, naked but for a sampot, stepped into view, and in his arms was the runaway apsaras whom they sought. Elated, Vama leaped from his place of concealment, calling to his men to follow him.

At sight of them King turned to escape, but he knew that he could make no speed while burdened with the girl. She, however, had seen the soldiers and slipped quickly from his arms. "We are lost!" she cried.

"Run!" cried King as he snatched a handful of arrows from his quiver and fitted one to his bow. "Stand back!" he cried to the warriors. But they only moved steadily forward. His bow-string twanged, and one of Lodivarman's brass-bound warriors sank to earth, an arrow through his throat. The others hesitated. They did not dare to cast their spears or loose their bolts for fear of injuring the girl.

Slowly King, with Fou-tan behind him, backed away into the jungle from which he had appeared. At the last instant he sped another arrow, which rattled harmlessly from the cuirass of Vama. Then, knowing that he could not fire upon them from the foliage, the soldiers rushed forward, while King continued to fall back slowly with Fou-tan, another arrow fitted to his bow.

Kau and Tchek had made a great circle in their hunting. With their arrows they had brought down three monkeys, and now they were returning to camp. They had almost arrived when they heard voices and the twang of a bow-string, and then they saw, directly ahead of them, a man and a girl crashing through the foliage of the jungle toward them. Instantly, by her dishevelled costume, they recognised the apsaras and guessed from the attitude of the two that they were backing away from Vama and his fellows.

Kau was a powerful, a courageous, and a resourceful man. Instantly he grasped the situation and instantly he acted. Leaping forward, he threw both his sinewy arms around Gordon King, pinning the other's arms to his body; while Tchek, following the example of his companion, seized Fou-tan. Almost immediately Vama and the others were upon the scene. An instant later Gordon King was disarmed, and his wrists were bound behind him; then the soldiers of Lodivarman dragged the captives back to their camping place.

Vama was tremendously elated. Now he would not have to make up any lies to appease the wrath of his king but could return to Lodidhapura in triumph, bearing not only the apsaras for whom he had been dispatched, but another prisoner as well.

King thought that they might make quick work of him in revenge for the soldier he had killed, but they did not appear to hold that against him at all. They questioned him at some length while they cooked their supper of monkey meat over a number of tiny fires; but as what he told them of another country far beyond their jungle was quite beyond their grasp, they naturally believed that he lied and insisted that he came from Pnom Dhek and that he was a runaway slave.

They were all quite content with the happy outcome of their assignment; and so, looking forward to their return to Lodidhapura on the morrow, they were inclined to be generous in their treatment of their prisoners, giving them meat to eat and water to drink. Their attitude toward Fou-tan was one of respectful awe. They knew that she was des-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

tinged to become one of the King's favourites, and it might prove ill for them, indeed, should they offer her any hurt or affront. Since their treatment of Gordon King, however, was not dictated by any such consideration, it was fortunate, indeed, for him that they were in a good humour.

Regardless, however, of the respectful attention shown her, Fou-tan was immersed in melancholy. A few moments before, she had foreseen escape and counted return to her native city almost an accomplished fact; now, once again, she was in the clutches of the soldiers of Lodivarman, while simultaneously she had brought disaster and, doubtless, death to the man who had befriended her.

"Oh, Gordon King," she said, "my heart is unstrung; my soul is filled with terror and consumed by horror, for not only must I return to the hideous fate from which I had escaped, but you must go to Lodidhapura to slavery or to death."

"We are not in Lodidhapura yet," whispered King. "Perhaps we shall escape."

The girl shook her head. "There is no hope," she said. "I shall go to the arms of Lodivarman, and you—"

"And I?" he asked.

"Slaves fight with other slaves and with wild beasts for the entertainment of Lodivarman and his court," she replied.

"We must escape then," said King. "Perhaps we shall die in the attempt, but in any event death awaits me and worse than death awaits you."

"What you command I shall do, Gordon King," replied Fou-tan.

But it did not appear that there was to be much opportunity for escape that night. After King had eaten they bound his wrists behind his back again and also bound his ankles together securely, while two warriors remained constantly with the girl; the others, their simple meal completed, stripped the armour and weapons from their fallen comrade and laid him upon a thick bed of dry wood that they had gathered.

Upon him, then, they piled a great quantity of limbs and branches, of twigs and dry grasses; and when night fell they lighted their weird funeral pyre, which was to answer its other dual purpose as a beast fire to protect them from the prowling carnivores. To King it was a gruesome sight, but neither Fou-tan nor the other Khmers seemed to be affected by it. The men gathered much wood and placed it near at hand that the fire might be kept burning during the night.

The flames leaped high, lighting the boles of the trees about them and the foliage arching above. The shadows rose and fell and twisted and writhed. Beyond the limits of the firelight was utter darkness, silence, mystery. King felt himself in an inverted cauldron of flame in which a human body was being consumed. .

The warriors lay about, laughing and talking. Their reminiscences were brutal and cruel. Their jokes and stories were broad and obscene. But there was an undercurrent of rough kindness and loyalty to one another that they appeared to be endeavoring to conceal as though they were ashamed of such soft emotion. They were soldiers. Transplanted to the camps of modern Europe, given a modern uniform and a modern language, their campfire conversation would have been the same. Soldiers do not change. One played upon a little musical instrument that resembled a Jew's harp. Two were gambling with

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

what appeared to be very similar to modern dice, and all that they said was so interlarded with strange and terrible oaths that the American could scarcely follow the thread of their thought. Soldiers do not change.

Vama came presently and squatted down near King and Fou-tan. "Do all the men in this far country of which you tell me go naked?" he demanded.

"No," replied the American. "When I had become lost in the jungle I was stricken with fever, and while I was sick the monkeys came and stole my clothing and my weapons."

"You live alone in the jungle?" asked Vama.

King thought quickly; he thought of Che and Kangrey and their fear of the soldiers in brass. "Yes," he said.

"Are you not afraid of My Lord the Tiger?" inquired Vama.

"I am watchful and I avoid him," replied the American.

"You do well to do so," said Vama, "for even with spear and arrows no lone man is a match for the great beast."

"But Gordon King is," said Fou-tan proudly.

Vama smiled. "The apsaras has been in the jungle but a night and a day," he reminded her. "How can she know so much about this man unless, as I suspect, he is, indeed, from Pnom Dhek?"

"He is not from Pnom Dhek," retorted Fou-tan. "And I know that he is a match for My Lord the Tiger because this day I saw him slay the beast with a single spear-cast."

Vama looked questioningly at King.

"It was only a matter of good fortune," said King.

"But you did it nevertheless," insisted Fou-tan.

"You killed a tiger with a single cast of your spear?" demanded Vama.

"As the beast charged him," said Fou-tan.

"That is, indeed, a marvellous feat," said Vama, with a soldier's ungrudging admiration for the bravery or prowess of another. "Lodivarman shall hear of this. A hunter of such spirit shall not go unrecognised in Lodidhapura. I can also bear witness that you are no mean bowman," added Vama, nodding toward the blazing funeral pyre. Then he arose and walked to the spot where King's weapons had been deposited. Picking up the spear he examined it closely. "By Siva!" he ejaculated. "The blood is scarcely dry upon it. Such a cast! You drove it a full two feet into the carcass of My Lord the Tiger."

"Straight through the heart," said Fou-tan.

The other soldiers had been listening to the conversation. It was noticeable immediately that their attitude toward King changed instantly, and thereafter they treated him with friendliness tinged by respect. However, they did not abate their watchfulness over him, but rather were increasingly careful to see that he was given no opportunity to escape, nor to have his hands free for any length of time.

Early the next morning, after a meagre breakfast, Vama set out with his detachment and his prisoners in the direction of Lodidhapura, leaving the funeral fire still blazing as it eagerly licked at a new supply of fuel.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The route they selected to Lodidhapura passed by chance, close to the spot where King had slain the tiger; and here, in the partially devoured carcass of the great beast, the soldiers of Lodivarman found concrete substantiation of Fou-tan's story.

It was late in the afternoon when the party emerged suddenly from the jungle at the edge of a great clearing. King voiced an involuntary exclamation of astonishment as he saw at a distance the walls and towers of a splendid city.

"Lodidhapura," said Fou-tan; "accursed city!" There was fear in her voice, and she trembled as she pressed closer to the American.

While King had long since become convinced that Lodidhapura had an actual existence of greater reality than legend or fever-wrought hallucination, yet he had been in no way prepared for the reality. A collection of nippa-thatched huts had comprised the extent of his mental picture of Lodidhapura, and now, as the reality burst suddenly upon him, he was dumbfounded.

Temples and palaces of stone reared their solid masses against the sky. Mighty towers, elaborately carved, rose in stately grandeur high over all. There were nippa-thatched huts as well, but these clustered close against the city's walls and were so overshadowed by the majestic mass of masonry beyond them that they affected the picture as slightly as might the bushes growing at its foot determine the grandeur of a mountain.

In the foreground were level fields in which laboured men and women, naked mostly, but for sampots—the nippa-thatched huts were their dwellings. They were the labourers, the descendants of slaves—Chams and Annamese—that the ancient, warlike Khmers had brought back from many a victory in the days when their power and their civilisation were the greatest upon earth.

From the edge of the jungle, at the point where the party had emerged, a broad avenue led toward one of the gates of the city, toward which Vama was conducting them. To his right, at a distance, King could see what appeared to be another avenue leading to another gate—an avenue which seemed to be more heavily travelled than that upon which they had entered. There were many people on foot, some approaching the city, others leaving it. At a distance they looked small, but he could distinguish them and also what appeared to be bullock carts moving slowly among the pedestrians.

Presently, at the far end of this distant avenue, he saw the great bulks of elephants; in a long column they entered the highway from the jungle and approached the city. They seemed to move in an endless procession, two abreast, hundreds of them, he thought. Never before had King seen so many elephants.

"Look!" he cried to Fou-tan. "There must be a circus coming to town."

"The King's elephants," explained Fou-tan, unimpressed.

"Why does he have so many?" asked King.

"A king without elephants would be no king," replied the girl. "They proclaim to all men the king's wealth and power. When he makes war, his soldiers go into battle upon them and fight from their backs, for those are the war elephants of Lodivarman."

"There must be hundreds of them," commented the American.

"There are thousands," said Fou-tan.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"And against whom does Lodivarman make war?"

"Against Pnom Dhek."

"Only against Pnom Dhek?" inquired King.

"Yes, only against Pnom Dhek."

"Why does he not make war elsewhere? Has he no other enemies?"

"Against whom else might he make war?" demanded Fou-tan. "There are only Pnom Dhek and Lodidhapura in all the world."

"Well, that does rather restrict him now, doesn't it?" admitted King.

For a moment they were silent. Then the girl spoke. "Gordon King," she said in that soft, caressing voice that the man found so agreeable, that often he had sought for means to lure her into conversation. "Gordon King, soon we shall see one another no more."

The American frowned. He did not like to think of that. He had tried to put it out of his mind and to imagine that by some chance they would be allowed to be together after they reached Lodidhapura, for he had found Fou-tan a cheery and pleasant companion even when her hour was darkest. Why, she was the only friend he had! Certainly they would not deny him the right to see her. From what he had gleaned during his conversation with Vama and the other warriors, King had become hopeful that Lodivarman would not treat him entirely as a prisoner or an enemy, but might give him the opportunity to serve the King as a soldier. Fou-tan had rather encouraged this hope too, for she knew that it was not at all improbable of realisation.

"Why do you say that?" demanded King. "Why shall we not see one another again?"

"Would you be sad, Gordon King, if you did not see Fou-tan any more?" she asked.

The man hesitated before he replied, as though weighing in his mind a problem that he had never before been called upon to consider; and as he hesitated a strange, hurt look came into the eyes of the girl.

"It is unthinkable, Fou-tan," he said at last, and the great brown eyes of the little apsaras softened and tears rose in them. "We have been such good friends," he added.

"Yes," she said. "We have known each other but a very short time, and yet we seem such good friends that it is almost as though we had known each other always."

"But why should we not see one another again?" he demanded once more.

"Lodivarman may punish me for running away, and there is only one punishment that would satisfy his pride in such an event and that is death; but if he forgives me, as he doubtless will, because of my youth and my great beauty and his desire for me, then I shall be taken into the King's palace and no more then might you see me than if I were dead. So you see, either way, the result is the same."

"I shall see you again, Fou-tan," said the man.

She shook her head. "I like to hear you say it, even though I know that it cannot be."

"You shall see, Fou-tan. If we both live I shall find a way to see you; and, too, I shall find a way to take you out of the palace of the King and back to Pnom Dhek."

She looked up at him with earnest eyes, full of confidence and admiration. "When I hear you say it," she said, "the impossible seems almost possible."

"Cling to the hope, Fou-tan," he told her; "and when we are separated, know always

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

that my every thought will be centered upon the means to reach you and take you away."

"That will help me to cling to life until the last horrible minute, beyond which there can be no hope and beyond which I will not go."

"What do you mean, Fou-tan?" There had been that in her voice which frightened him.

"I can live in the palace of the King with hope until again the King sends for me, and then—"

"And then?"

"And then—death."

"No, Fou-tan, you must not say that. You must not think it."

"What else could there be—after?" she demanded. "He is a leper!" The utter horror in her voice and expression, as her lips formed the word, aroused to its fullest the protective instinct of the man. He wanted to throw an arm about her, to soothe and reassure her; but his wrists were bound together behind him, and he could only move on dumbly at her side toward the great, carved gate of Lodidhapura.

The sentry at the gate halted Vama and his party, though his greeting, following his formal challenge, indicated that he was well aware of the identity of all but King, a fact which impressed the American as indicative of the excellent military discipline that obtained in this remote domain of the leper king.

Summoned by the sentry, the captain of the gate came from his quarters within the massive towers that flanked the gateway to Lodidhapura. He was a young man, resplendent in trappings of gold and blue and yellow. His burnished cuirass and his helmet were of the precious metal, but his weapons were stern and lethal.

"Who comes?" he demanded.

"Vama of the King's guard, with the apsaras from Pnom Dhek, who ran away into the jungle, and a warrior from a far country whom we took prisoner," replied the leader of the detachment.

"You have done well, Vama," said the officer, as his eyes quickly appraised the two captives. "Enter and go at once to the palace of the King, for such were his orders in the event that you returned successful from your quest."

The streets of Lodidhapura, beyond the gate, were filled with citizens and slaves. Tiny shops with wide awnings lined the street through which Vama's captives were conducted. Merchants in long robes and ornate headdresses presided over booths where were displayed a bewildering variety of merchandise, including pottery, silver and gold ornaments, rugs, stuffs, incense, weapons, and armour.

Men and women of high rank, beneath gorgeous parasols borne by almost naked slaves, bartered at the booths for the wares displayed; high-hatted priests moved slowly through the throng, while burly soldiers elbowed their way roughly along the avenue. Many turned to note the escort and its prisoners, and the sight of Fou-tan elicited a wealth of ejaculation and many queries; but to all such Vama, fully aware of his importance, turned a deaf ear.

As they approached the centre of Lodidhapura, King was amazed by the evident

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

wealth of the city, by the goods displayed in the innumerable shops, and by the grandeur of the architecture. The ornate carvings that covered the facades of the great buildings, the splendour of the buildings themselves, filled him with awe; and when at last the party halted before the palace of Lodivarman, the American was staggered by the magnificence which confronted him.

They had been conducted through a great park that lay below, and to the east of the stately temple of Siva, which dominated the entire city of Lodidhapura. Great trees and gorgeous shrubbery shadowed winding avenues that were flanked by statues and columns of magnificent, though sometimes barbaric, design; and then the palace of the King had burst suddenly upon his astonished gaze—a splendid building embellished from foundation to loftiest tower with tile of the most brilliant colouring and fanciful design.

Before the entrance to the palace of Lodivarman stood a guard of fifty warriors. No brass-bound soldiers these, resplendent in shining cuirasses of burnished gold, whose haughty demeanour bespoke their exalted position and the high responsibility that devolved upon them.

Gordon King had difficulty in convincing himself of the reality of the scene. Again and again his sane Yankee head assured him that no such things might exist in the jungles of Cambodia and that he still was the victim of the hallucinations of high fever; but when the officer at the gate had interrogated Vama and presently commands were received to conduct the entire party to the presence of Lodivarman, and still the hallucination persisted in all its conclusiveness, he resigned himself to the actualities that confronted him and would have accepted as real whatever grotesque or impossible occurrences or figures might have impinged themselves upon his perceptive faculties.

Escorted by a detachment of the golden warriors of Lodivarman, the entire city was conducted through long corridors toward the centre of the palace and at last, after a wait before massive doors, was ushered into a great hall, at the far end of which a number of people were seated upon a raised dais. Upon the floor of the chamber were many men in gorgeous raiment—priests, courtiers, and soldiers. One of the latter, resplendent in rich trappings, received them and conducted them toward the far end of the chamber, where they were halted before the dais.

King saw seated upon a great throne an emaciated man, upon every exposed portion of whose body were ugly and repulsive sores. To his right and below him were sombre men in rich garb, and to his left a score of sad-eyed girls and women. This, then, was Lodivarman, the Leper King of Lodidhapura! The American felt an inward revulsion at the mere sight of this repulsive creature and simultaneously understood the horror that Fou-tan had evinced at the thought of personal contact with the leper into whose clutches fate had delivered her.

Before Lodivarman knelt a slave, bearing a great salver of food, into which the King continually dipped with his long-nailed fingers. He ate almost constantly during the audience, and as King was brought nearer he saw that the delicacies intended to tempt the palate of a king were naught but lowly mushrooms.

“Who are these?” demanded Lodivarman, his dead eyes resting coldly on the pris-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

oners.

"Vama, the commander of ten," replied the officer addressed, "who has returned from his mission, to the honour of the King, with the apsaras for whom he was dispatched and a strange warrior whom he took prisoner."

"Fou-tan of Pnom Dhek," demanded Lodivarman, "why did you seek to escape the honour for which I had destined you?"

"Great King," replied the girl, "my heart is still in the land of my sire. I would have returned to Pnom Dhek, for I longed for the father and the friends whom I love and who love me."

"A pardonable desire," commented Lodivarman, "and this time thy transgression shall be overlooked, but beware a repetition. You are destined to the high honour of the favour of Lodivarman. See that hereafter, until death, thou dost merit it."

Fou-tan, trembling, curtsied low; and Lodivarman turned his cold, fishy eyes upon Gordon King. "And what manner of man bringeth you before the King now?" he asked.

"A strange warrior from some far country, Glorious King," replied Vama.

"A runaway slave from Pnom Dhek more likely," commented Lodivarman.

"Even as I thought, Resplendent Son of Heaven," answered Vama; "but his deeds are such as to leave no belief that he be either a slave or the son of slaves."

"What deeds?" demanded the King.

"He faced my detachment single-handed, and with a lone shaft he slew one of the best of the King's bowmen."

"Is that all?" asked Lodivarman. "A mere freak of Fate may account for that."

"No, Brother of the Gods," replied Vama. "There is more."

"And what is it? Hasten, I cannot spend the whole evening in idle audience over a slave."

"With a single spear-cast he slew My Lord the Tiger," cried Vama.

"And you saw this?"

"Fou-tan saw it, and all of us saw the carcass of the tiger the following morning. O King, he drove his spear a full two feet into the breast of the tiger as the great beast charged. He is a marvellous warrior, and Vama is proud to have brought such a one to serve in the ranks of the army of Lodivarman."

For a while Lodivarman was silent, his dead eyes upon King, while he helped himself from time to time to the tender-cooked mushrooms with which the slave tempted him.

"With a single cast he slew My Lord the Tiger?" demanded Lodivarman of Fou-tan.

"It is even so, Great King," replied the girl.

"How came he to do it? Surely no sane man would tempt the great beast unless in dire predicament."

"He did it to save me, upon whom the tiger was preparing to spring."

"So I am doubly indebted to this stranger," said Lodivarman. "And what gift would suit your appetite for reward?" demanded the King.

"I desire no reward," replied the American, "only that you will permit Fou-tan to

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

return to her beloved Pnom Dhek."

"You do not ask much!" cried Lodivarman. "I like your ways. You shall not be destroyed, but instead you shall serve me in the palace guards; such a spearman should prove worth his weight in gold. As for your request, remember that Fou-tan belongs to Lodivarman, the King, and so may no longer be the subject of any conversation, upon pain of death. Take him to the quarters of the guard!" he directed one of his officers, nodding at King, "and see that he is well cared for, trained and armed."

"Yes, most magnificent of kings," replied the man addressed.

"Take the girl to the quarters of the women and look to it that she does not again escape," commanded Lodivarman, with a gesture that dismissed them all.

As he was escorted from the audience chamber through one exit, King saw Fou-tan led away toward another. Her eyes were turned back toward him, and in them was a haunting suggestion of grief and hopelessness that cut him to the heart.

"Good-by, Gordon King!" she called to him.

"Until we meet again, Fou-tan," he replied.

"You will not meet again," said the officer who was escorting him, as he hustled the American from the chamber.

The barracks to which King was assigned stood a considerable distance in the rear of the palace, not far from the stables in which were housed the King's elephants, yet, like the latter, within the grounds of the royal enclosure. The long, low buildings that housed the soldiers of Lodivarman's royal guard were plastered inside and out with mud and thatched with palm fronds. Along either wall upon the hardpacked dirt floors were pallets of straw, where the common soldiers were bedded down like horses. A space of some four feet in width by seven in length was allotted to each man, and into the wall above his pallet pegs had been driven upon which he might hang his weapons and his clothing, a cooking-pot, and a vessel for water. Along the centres of the buildings was a clear space about eight feet wide, forming an aisle in which soldiers might be formed for inspection. Just beneath the eaves was an open space running the full length of both walls, giving ample ventilation but very little light to the interior of the barracks. The doors were at either end of the buildings.

The building to which King was escorted was about two hundred feet long and housed a hundred men. It was but one of a number of similar structures, which he later learned were placed at strategic positions just inside the wall of the royal enclosure, where five thousand men-at-arms were constantly maintained.

At Varna's request King was assigned to his unit of ten to replace the soldier that he had slain in the jungle, and thus the American took up his life in the unit of ten, with Kau and Tchek and Vama and the others with whom he was already acquainted as his companions.

From a naked jungle hunter to a soldier of a Khmer king, he had crossed in a single step long ages of evolution, and yet he was still a thousand years from the era into which he had been born.

The lives of private soldiers of the royal guard of a Khmer king were far from thrilling. Their most important assignment was to guard duty, which fell to the lot of each

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

soldier once in every four days. There were drills daily, both upon foot and upon elephants, and there were numerous parades and ceremonies.

Aside from the care of their own weapons they were called upon for no manual labour, such work being attended to by slaves. Once a week the straw which formed their pallets was hauled away upon bullock-carts to the elephants' stables, where it was used to bed down the great pachyderms, and fresh straw was brought to the barracks.

Their leisure, of which they usually had a little at various times during the day, the soldiers utilised in gossiping or gambling, or listening to the storytellers, certain of whom were freely admitted to the royal grounds. Many were the stories to which King listened—stories of ancient power and stories of kings who owned a million slaves and a hundred thousand elephants; stories of Kambu, the mythical founder of the Khmer race; of Yacovarman, the king of glory; and of Jayavarman VIII, the last of the great kings. Interwoven throughout all the fabric of these hoary tales were the Nagas and the Yeacks, those ever-recurring mythological figures that he had met in the folk-lore of the people beyond the jungle, in the dark dwelling of Che and Kangrey, and now in the shadow of the palace of the great King, Lodivarman.

Or when there were no story-tellers, or he tired of listening to the idle gossip of his fellows, or became bored by their endless games of chance, King would sit in silence, meditating upon the past and seeking an answer to the riddle of the future. Recollection of his distant home and friends always raised a vision of Susan Anne Prentice—home and friends and Susan Anne—they were all one; they constituted his past and beckoned him into the future. It seemed difficult to think of life without home and friends and Susan Anne when he thought of them, but always the same little figure rose in front of them, clear and distinct, as they faded slowly out of the picture: sad eyes in which there yet dwelt a wealth of inherent happiness and mirth, a piquant face, and gleaming teeth behind red lips. Always his thoughts, no matter how far they roamed, returned to this dainty flower of girlhood, and then his brows would contract and his jaws clench and he speculated upon her fate and chafed and fretted because of his inability to succour her.

And one day as he sat meditating thus he saw a strange figure approaching across the barracks yard. "Ye gods!" he exclaimed, almost audibly; "one by one my dreams are coming true! If it isn't the old bird with the red umbrella that I saw just before Che and Kangrey rescued me, I'll eat my shirt."

King had had considerable difficulty in differentiating between the fantastic figures of his fever-induced hallucinations and the realities of his weird experiences in the jungle, so that though Che and Kangrey had insisted that there had been an old man with a long yellow robe and a red umbrella and although King had believed them, yet it was with somewhat of a shock that he recognised the reality. As Vay Thon passed among the soldiers, they arose to their feet and bowed low before him, evincing the awe and reverence in which they held him. He passed them with nodding head and mumbled benediction, gazing intently at each face as though he sought some particular warrior.

Seeing that the others rose and bowed before the high priest, King did likewise; and when Vay Thon's eyes fell upon him they lighted with recognition. "It is you, my son," he said. "Do you recall me?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"You ate Vay Thon, the high priest of Siva," replied the American.

"He whom you saved from My Lord the Tiger," replied the priest.

"An obligation which you fully discharged when you commanded Che and Kangrey to nurse me back to life."

"An obligation that I may never fully discharge," replied Vay Thon; "and because of this I came to search for you, that I may offer you proof of my undying gratitude."

"How did you know that I was here?" asked King.

"I have talked with Fou-tan," replied Vay Thon, "and when she had described the warrior who had rescued her, I knew at once that it must be you."

"You have seen Fou-tan and talked with her?" asked King.

The high priest nodded.

"And she is well—and safe?" demanded King.

"Her body is well, but her heart is sick," replied the high priest; "but she is safe—those who find favour in the eyes of the King are always safe, while the King's favour lasts."

"Has she—has he—"

"I understand what you would ask, my son," said Vay Thon. "Lodivarman has not yet sent for her."

"But he will," cried King.

"To-night, I think," said Vay Thon.

The anguish in the young man's eyes would have been apparent to one of far less intelligence and discernment than Vay Thon. He laid his hand in compassion upon the shoulder of the American. "If I could help you, my son, I would," he said; "but in such matters kings may not be crossed even by gods."

"Where is she?" asked King.

"She is in the King's house," replied Vay Thon, pointing toward a wing of the palace that was visible from where they stood.

For a long moment the eyes of the American, lighted by determination and by a complexity of other fires that burned within him, remained riveted upon the house of the King.

Vay Thon, the high priest of Siva, was old and wise and shrewd. "I read your heart, my son," he said, "and my heart goes out in sympathy to yours, but what you plan is impossible of execution; it would but lead to torture and to death."

"In what room is she in the house of the King?" demanded the American.

Vay Thon shook his head sadly. "Forget this madness," he said. "It can lead but to the grave. I am your friend and I would help you, but I would be no friend were I to encourage you in the mad venture that I can only too well guess is forming in your mind. I owe you my life; and always shall I stand ready to aid you in any way that lies within my power, except in this. And now, farewell; and may the gods cause you to forget your sorrow."

As Vay Thon turned and walked slowly back in the direction of the temple, Gordon

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

King stood gazing at the house of Lodivarman; forgotten were Vay Thon; forgotten were his wise words of counsel. King seemed hypnotised; a single figure filled the retina of his mind's eye—a tiny figure, yet it crowded out all else—through walls of tile and lead he saw it crouching in despair in the house of the King.

The afternoon was drawing to a close. The warriors who were to relieve the palace guard at sundown were already buckling on their brass cuirasses, straightening their leather tunics, adjusting their helmets, polishing weapons until they glistened even in the dark interior of the barracks.

Gordon King was recalled to his surroundings by two tardy warriors who were hastening to accoutre themselves for guard duty; and in that instant was born the mad scheme that, without the slightest consideration, he was to attempt to put into execution.

Turning quickly, he overtook the men just before they entered the barracks and touched one of them upon the shoulder. "May I have a word with you?" he asked.

"I have no time. I am already late," replied the warrior.

"I shall be quick, then," replied King. "Let me take your place on the guard to-night, and I will give you all of my next pay."

Instantly the man was all suspicion. "That is a strange request," he said. "Most warriors would pay to be relieved of guard duty. What is your purpose?"

"There is a certain slave girl attached to the house of the King, and to-night she will be looking for a certain warrior." And the American nudged the other in the ribs and gave him a sly wink.

The warrior's face relaxed into a grin. "It might go hard with us if we were caught," he said; "but, by Siva, three months' pay is not to be considered lightly. Quick! Get into your harness, while I explain the matter to the others of the ten. But be sure that you do not say anything about the pay, for if they knew that, each would want his share."

"You are doing it for friendship," said King with a laugh, as he hastened into the interior of the barracks. As he hurriedly adjusted his cuirass and helmet, the warrior whose place he was to take was explaining the matter to the other members of the ten, who received it with rough laughter and broad jokes.

At first the petty officer in command of the ten positively forbade the exchange, and it was necessary for King to promise him a month's pay before he, at last, reluctantly acceded. "But remember," he admonished them, "I know nothing of it, for no such thing may be done with my knowledge."

As the ten marched toward the house of the King, the American's excitement increased, though outwardly he was calm. Just what he was going to do and just how he was going to execute it, the man could not know, because he had no idea as to what obstacles would present themselves, or, upon the other hand, what good fortune might lie in store for him. He fully appreciated that his proposed action was unwise, ill-considered, and almost definitely doomed to defeat; but could he have turned back he would not have done so.

Presently they were halted at the King's house, a little to one side of the main entrance and before a low doorway. Other contingents of the guard were arriving from other barracks, while members of the old guard emerged from the low doorway and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

were formed for the brief ceremony that marked the changes of the guard.

Immediately following the ceremony a number of the new guard were told off to relieve the sentries upon their posts about the grounds and within the interior of the palace, and King happened to be among these. As he was marched away he could not help but wonder what post Fate would select for him, though wherever it should be he was determined that he would find the means for gaining access to the interior of the palace.

The detail of the guard was first marched to the far end of the wing, and here a sentry was relieved who paced back and forth in front of a tiny doorway, shadowed by trees and shrubbery. King thought that this would have been an excellent post; but it did not fall to him; and as they continued on about the wing of the palace, relieving sentry after sentry, he began to fear that he was not going to be posted at all; and, indeed, the detail traversed the outside of the entire wing, and still the American had been assigned no post. And then they came at last before the ornate entrance to the King's house, where ten men were detached from the detail to relieve those posted at this important spot.

All the sentries hitherto relieved were then marched away, and King found himself one of five who had not as yet been posted. These, to the astonishment and gratification of the American, were marched into the palace. Three were detailed to posts in the long entrance corridor, while King and the other remaining warrior were marched to the doorway of a large and luxuriously furnished apartment. At one end of the chamber, raised slightly above the floor level, was a dais covered with gorgeous rugs. Upon it stood a low table laid with a service of solid gold, with bowls of fruit and sweetmeats, several massive golden jugs, and ornately carved goblets. Behind the table was a pile of pillows covered with rich stuff, and over all a canopy of cloth of gold. On the floor of the chamber, below the dais, was a long table, similarly though not so richly laid; and this was entirely surrounded by rich cushions.

On either side of the doorway, facing the interior of the room, stood King and his fellow warrior, two bronze statues cuirassed in burnished brass. For five minutes they stood there thus facing the empty chamber; and then a door at the far side opened, and a file of slaves entered, some twenty-five or thirty in all. Two of these took their places at opposite ends of the dais back of the table and the pillows, standing erect with arms folded and eyes staring straight to the front. The other slaves took similar positions at intervals behind the long table on the main floor and faced the dais. Between the long table and the dais and facing the latter stood a richly garbed individual whom King mentally classified as a sort of major-domo.

Again there was a wait of several minutes, during which no one spoke or moved. Then, through the doorway which King and his fellow guarded, a party of men entered the chamber. Some were warriors, cuirassed and helmeted in gold, while others were garbed in long robes of vivid hues, richly embroidered. A number of these wore fantastic headdresses, several of which were over two feet in height.

These banquet guests formed in little groups behind the long table, engaged in low-toned conversation. There was no laughter now and they spoke scarcely above a whisper. It was as though a pall of gloom had enveloped them the instant they entered the gorgeously appointed chamber. Almost immediately an arras at the rear of the dais was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

drawn aside, revealing a warrior of the guard, who sounded a fanfare upon a golden trumpet. As the last note died away, the slaves in the chamber prostrated themselves, pressing their foreheads to the floor, while the guests kneeled with bowed heads; and then Lodivarman, the Leper King of Lodidhapura, came slowly through the opening at the rear of the dais. Only the trumpeter and the two guards at the door remained standing as Lodivarman advanced and seated himself upon the pillows behind his table. For a moment he looked about the apartment through his dull eyes, and then, apparently satisfied, he struck his palms together a single time.

Immediately all in the apartment arose to their feet. The major-domo bowed low three times before the King. Each of the guests did the same, and then, in silence, took their places at the banquet table. When all had been seated, Lodivarman struck his palms together a second time; and immediately the slaves stepped forward upon noiseless feet and commenced to serve the viands and pour the wine. A third time Lodivarman gave the signal, upon which the guests relaxed and entered into low-voiced conversation.

From his post at the entrance-way, Gordon King noticed the bountiful array of food upon the long banquet table. Only a few of the articles did he recognise, but it was evident that fruit and vegetables and meat were there in abundance. The largest bowl upon the little table of the King was rilled with mushrooms, aside from which there was little else upon Lodivarman's table other than fruit, sweetmeats, and wine. From what he had previously seen of Lodivarman and from the gossip that he had heard in the barracks he was aware that this monarch was so addicted to the use of mushrooms that the eating of them had become a fixed habit with him almost to the exclusion of proper and natural food, and his taste for them was so inordinate that he had long since ordained them royal food, forbidden under pain of death to all save the King.

As the tiresome meal progressed, the banqueters carried on their forced and perfunctory conversation, while Lodivarman sat silent and morose, his attention divided between his mushrooms and his wine. As King watched he could not but compare this meal with formal dinners he had attended in New York and Washington, and he sympathised with the banqueters in the hall of Lodivarman, because he knew that they were suffering the same boredom that he had once endured, but with the advantage that they did not have to appear to be happy and gay.

Presently Lodivarman made a sign to the majordomo, who clapped his hands twice; and immediately all eyes turned to a doorway at one side of the chamber, through which there now filed a company of apsaras. About the hips the girls wore girdles of virgin gold, which supported skirts that fell to within a few inches of their ankles. From their hips two stiff-pointed panels of cloth bowed outward, falling almost to the floor. Above the hips their bodies were naked, except for rich armlets and necklaces. Their head-dresses were fantastic contrivances that resembled ornate candelabra, heavy ear-rings fell to their shoulders, and above their bare feet were anklets of precious metal. A few wore masks of hideous design, but the painted lips and cheeks and darkened eyes of most of them were pretty; but there was one among them who was gorgeous in her loveliness. As the eyes of Gordon King fell upon her face, he felt his heart quicken, for she was Fou-tan. She had not seen him when she entered; and now she danced with her back

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

toward him, a dance that consisted of strange postures of the feet and legs, the hips, the arms and hands and heads of the little dancers. As they went through the slow steps of the dance, they bent their fingers, their hands, and their arms into such unnatural positions that Gordon King marvelled, not only upon the long hours and days of practice that must have been necessary for them to perfect themselves, but also upon the mentality of an audience that could find entertainment in such a combination of beauty and grotesqueness. That the dance was ritualistic and had some hidden religious significance was the only explanation that he could place upon it, yet even so he realised that it was fully as artistic and beautiful and intelligent as much of the so-called aesthetic dancing that he had been compelled to endure in modern America and Europe.

There were twenty apsarases taking part in the dance, but King saw only one—a lithe and beautiful figure that moved faultlessly through the long sequences of intricate and difficult posturing. Mad scheme after mad scheme passed through his mind as he sought for some plan whereby he might take advantage of their proximity to effect her release from the palace of the King, but each one must needs be discarded in the light of sober reflection. He must wait, but while he waited he planned and hoped.

As the long dance drew to a close, Gordon King saw Lodivarman beckon to the major-domo to him and whisper briefly to that functionary; and as the apsarases were withdrawing from the room, the man hastened after them and touched Fou-tan upon the shoulder. He spoke to her, and King could see the girl shrink. Lodivarman clapped his hands three times, and again the slaves prostrated themselves and the guests kneeled; while Lodivarman rose to his feet and walked slowly from the chamber through the same doorway by which he had entered. Immediately after he was gone the guests arose and left the chamber, apparently only too glad to be released from the ordeal of a state banquet. The slaves began to gather up the dishes and bear them away, while the majordomo led Fou-tan across the chamber, up on to the royal dais and bowed her into the doorway through which Lodivarman had disappeared.

Gordon King could scarce restrain himself as the full import of what he had just witnessed revealed itself to his tortured mind. Inclination prompted him to run across the chamber and follow Lodivarman and Fou-tan through that doorway of mystery, but again sane judgment interposed.

With the passing of the King and the guests, the American's fellow guardsman had relaxed. He no longer stood in statuesque immobility, but lounged carelessly against the wall watching the slaves bearing away the trays of unfinished food. "We should enjoy that more than the guests seemed to," he said to King, nodding toward the viands.

"Yes," replied the American, his mind upon other matters.

"I have stood guard here many times in the past," continued the warrior, "and never have I gone hungry after a banquet."

"I am not hungry now," said King shortly.

"I am," said the warrior. "Just beyond that door they stack up the dishes. If you will watch here, I can go in there and eat all that I want."

"Go ahead," said the American.

"If you see an officer approaching, whistle once."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"If I see one I shall whistle. Go ahead," said King, seeing here a God-given opportunity to carry out the plan that the presence of the other warrior would have thwarted.

"It will not take me long," said the warrior, and with that he hurried quickly toward the little door through which the slaves were carrying the food.

Scarcely had the door closed behind his companion when King crossed the apartment and leaped to the dais. At the moment the chamber was empty, not even a single slave remaining within it, and there was no witness as the American parted the hangings and disappeared through the doorway that shortly before had swallowed Lodivarman and Fou-tan.

The major-domo led Fou-tan through a dimly lighted corridor to a small apartment not far from the banquet hall. The interior walls of thin sheet lead, hand-pounded upon great blocks of stone, were covered with paintings depicting scenes of war, the chase, the palace, and the temple. There were spearmen and bowmen and great elephants trapped for war. A king upon horseback, followed by his courtiers, rode down a tiger and slew him with a spear. Countless apsarases posed in wooden postures of the dance. Priests in long robes and fantastic headdresses marched in interminable procession toward a temple to Siva, and everywhere throughout the decorations of the chamber was the symbol of the Destroyer. Upon the floor were costly rugs and the skins of tigers and leopards. There were low tables with vessels containing fruit or sweets and statuary of pottery and stone. At one side of the chamber, depending from the ceiling by three chains, swung an elaborately carved vessel from which arose the smoke and the heavy fragrance of burning incense, while upon the floor was an abundance of cushions covered by rich embroidery of many hues. The whole apartment was a blaze of colour, softened and subdued in the light of three cressets burning steadily in the quiet air.

"Why have you brought me here?" demanded Fou-tan.

"It is the will of Lodivarman, the King," replied the major-domo.

"I should be allowed three days to prepare myself," said the girl. "It is the custom."

The major-domo shook his head. "I know nothing beyond the orders I received from Lodivarman," he said. "Customs are made by kings—and unmade."

Fou-tan looked apprehensively about her, taking in the details of the apartment. She saw that in addition to the door through which they had entered there was another door at one end of the room and that along one side there were three windows, entirely covered now by the hangings that had been drawn across them. She moved uneasily about while the major-domo remained standing, always facing her. "Will you not be seated?" he asked.

"I prefer to stand," she replied, and then, "What are your orders?"

"To bring you here," replied the major-domo.

"And that was all?"

"That was all."

"Why was I brought here?" persisted the girl.

"Because the King ordered it," replied the man.

"Why did he order it?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"It is not for me to know or to seek to know more than the King divulges. I am but a servant." For a time the silence of the room was broken only by their breathing and the soft movements of the girl's skirt as she paced nervously the length of the gorgeous apartment that, had its walls been of cold granite, could have meant no more a prison to her.

Her thoughts were confused by the hopelessness of her situation. She had had no time to prepare for this, not in the sense of the preparation that was customary for a new bride for Lodivarman, but in a sterner, a more personal sense. She had sworn to herself that she would die before she would submit to the loathsome embraces of the Leper King; but taken thus unaware she had no means for death, so that now she concentrated every faculty of her ingenuity to discover some plan whereby she might postpone the fatal hour or find the means to liberate herself at once from the hateful crisis which she felt impended.

And then the door at the end of the room opened and Lodivarman entered. He halted just within the threshold, closing the door behind him, and stood thus for a moment in silence, his dead eyes upon her where, reacting unconsciously to a lifetime of training, she had gone on her knees before the King, as had the major-domo.

"Arise!" commanded Lodivarman, including them both in a gesture, and then he turned to the man. "You may go," he said. "See that no one enters this wing of the palace until I summon."

The major-domo, bowing low, backed from the room, closing the door softly as he departed. Then it was that Lodivarman advanced toward Fou-tan. He laid a hand upon her naked shoulder as she shrank back involuntarily.

"You fear me," he said. "To you I am a loathsome leper. They all fear me; they all hate me, but what can they do? What can you do? I am King. May the gods help the poor leper who is not a king!"

"Oh, King, I am not a king," cried the girl. "You call upon the gods to help the poor leper who is not a king, and yet you would make a leper of me, you who could save me!"

Lodivarman laughed. "Why should I spare you?" he demanded. "It was a woman who made me a leper. Let her sin be upon all women. The accursed creature! From that moment I have hated women; even while I have held them in my arms I have hated them, but some malignant demon has thwarted me. Never has a woman contracted leprosy from me; yet I always hope, and the more beautiful and young they are the higher rises my hope, for once I was young and beautiful until that accursed woman robbed me of happiness and took away from me all except the life I had grown to hate; but perhaps in you my revenge shall be consummated as I have always hoped. With you it seems that it must be fulfilled, for you are very young and by far the most beautiful woman that has been offered in atonement for the sin of her sister. I shall tell you the story; I tell it to each of them that they may know how well they deserve whatever fate the gods may hold in store for them, because, like the accursed one, they are women.

"It was many years ago. I was in the prime of my youth and my beauty. I had ridden out to hunt My Lord the Tiger with a hundred courtiers and a thousand men-at-arms. The hunt was a success. Upon that wall beside you the artist has painted Lodivarman slaying

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the great beast. Never shall I forget the day of our triumphal return, of Lodidhapura. Ah, Siva, no, never shall I forget. It was a day of triumph, a day of discovery, and the day of my cruel undoing by the foul creature whose sin you are to expiate.

“It was upon that day that I first tasted a mushroom. At a little village in the jungle a native upon bended knee offered me a platter of this then strange food. I partook. Never in my life had I tasted a viand more delicious. Dismounting, I sat beneath a tree before the hut of the poor peasant, and there I ate all of the mushrooms that he had prepared—a great platter of them—but I did not seem able to satisfy my craving for them, nor have I since then. I questioned him as to what they were and how they grew, and I gave orders that he be brought to Lodidhapura and given the means to propagate the royal food. He still lives. He has been showered with honours and riches, and still he raises mushrooms for Lodivarman; nor may any other in the realm raise them, nor any but the King partake of them. And thus there occurred a great happiness and a great satisfaction upon the selfsame day that saw all else snatched from me.

“As we entered Lodidhapura later in the day, crowds lined the avenue to see their King. They sang and shouted in welcome and threw blossoms at us. My charger, frightened by the noise and the bombardment of blossoms, became unmanageable, and I was hurled heavily to the ground; whereat a woman of the crowd rushed forward and threw herself upon me and with her arms about me covered my face and mouth with kisses. When my courtiers reached my side and dragged her from me and lifted me to my feet, it was seen that the woman was a leper. A great cry of horror arose, and the people who had come to applaud me shrank away, and even my courtiers drew to one side; and alone I mounted my horse and alone I rode into the city of Lodidhapura.

“Within an hour I was stricken; these hideous sores came upon my body as by magic, and never since have I been free from them. Now you shall have them, woman—daughter of a woman. As I have rotted, so shall you rot; as I am loathed, so shall you be loathed; as my youth and beauty were blasted, so shall yours be. Come!” and he laid a heavy hand upon the arm of Fou-tan.

Gordon King, entering the dimly lighted corridor, paused a moment to listen, to note if he might not hear voices that would guide him to those he sought. As he stood there thus, he saw a door open farther along the corridor and a man back out whom he instantly recognised as the major-domo. King looked for a place to hide, but there was no hiding-place; the corridor was straight and none too wide, and it was inevitable that he would be discovered if the majordomo came that way, as he did immediately after he had closed the door of the apartment he had just quitted.

King grasped at the only chance that occurred to him for disarming the suspicions of the majordomo. Snapping to rigid attention, he stood as though a posted sentry just inside the entrance to the corridor. The major-domo saw him, and a puzzled frown crossed the man's face as he approached along the corridor, halting when he came opposite King.

“What do you here, man?” he demanded suspiciously.

“By the command of Lodivarman, the King, I have been posted here with orders to let no one enter.”

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The major-domo seemed puzzled and rather at a loss as to what action he should take in the matter. He thought of returning to Lodivarman for verification of the warrior's statement, but he knew the short temper of his King and hesitated to incur his wrath in the event that the warrior had spoken the truth. "The King said naught to me of this," he said. "He commanded me to see that no one entered this wing of the palace."

"That is what I am here for," replied King; "and, furthermore, I must tell you that nothing was said to me about you and, therefore, I must order you to leave at once."

"But I am the major-domo," said the man haughtily.

"But I am the King's sentry," replied the American, "and if you wish to question the King's orders, let us go to Lodivarman together and see what he has to say about it."

"Perhaps he forgot that he had ordered a sentry posted here," temporised the major-domo. "But how else could you have been posted here other than by orders from an officer of the King?"

"How else indeed?" inquired the American.

"Very well," snapped the major-domo. "See that you let no one enter," and he was about to pass on when King detained him.

"I have never been posted here before," he said; "perhaps you had better tell me if there is any other doorway in the corridor through which anyone might enter this section of the palace, that I may watch that also; and also if there is anyone here beside the King."

"Only the King and an apsaras are here," replied the man. "They are in that room from which you saw me come. The doorway this side upon the right leads down a flight of steps to a corridor that terminates at a door opening into the royal garden at this end of the palace. It is never used except by Lodivarman, and as the door is heavily barred upon the inside and a sentry posted upon the outside, there is no likelihood that anyone will enter there, so that there remains only this doorway to be guarded."

"My zeal shall merit the attention of the King," said the sentry, as the major-domo passed on into the banquet hall and disappeared from view.

The moment that the man was out of sight King hastened quickly up the corridor and paused before the door, behind which the major-domo told him he had left Lodivarman and Fou-tan. As he paused he heard a woman's voice raised in a cry of terror; it came from beyond the heavy panels of the door, and it was scarcely voiced ere Gordon King pushed the portal aside and stepped into the room.

Before nun Fou-tan was struggling to release herself from the clutches of Lodivarman. Horror and revulsion were written large upon her countenance, while rage and lust distorted the hideous face of the Leper King.

At the sight of the warrior Lodivarman's face went livid with rage even greater than that which had been dominating him.

"How dare you!" he screamed. "You shall die for this. Who sent you hither?"

Gordon King closed the door behind him and advanced toward Lodivarman.

"Gordon King!" cried the girl, her astonishment reflected in her tone and in the expression upon her face. For an instant hope sprang to her eyes, but quickly it faded to be

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

replaced by the fear that she felt for him now as well as for herself. "Oh, Gordon King, they will kill you for this!"

And now Lodivarman recognised him, too. "So you are the warrior who slew the tiger single-handed!" he cried. "What brought you here?"

"I have come for Fou-tan," said King simply.

Lodivarman's rotting face twitched with rage. He was rendered speechless by the effrontery of this low knave. Twice he tried to speak, but his anger choked him; and then he sprang for a cord that depended against one of the walls, but King guessed his purpose and forestalled him. Springing forward, he grasped Lodivarman roughly by the shoulder and hurled him back. "Not a sound out of you," he said, "or Lodidhapura will be needing a new king."

It was then that Lodivarman found his voice. "You shall be boiled in oil for this," he said in a low voice.

"Then I might as well kill you," said Gordon King, "for if I have to die, it is well that I have my vengeance first," and he raised his spear as though to cast it.

"No, no!" exclaimed Lodivarman. "Do not kill me. I grant you pardon for your great offence."

King could not but marvel at the workings of the great law of self-preservation that caused this diseased and rotten thing, burdened by misery, hatred, and unhappiness, so tenaciously to cling to the hope of life.

"Come, come!" cried Lodivarman. "Tell me what you want and be gone."

"I told you what I wanted," said King. "I came for Fou-tan."

"You cannot have her," cried Lodivarman. "She is mine. Think you that a woman would leave a king for you, knave?"

"Ask her," said King; but there was no need to ask her. Fou-tan crossed quickly to the American's side.

"Oh, Lodivarman," she cried, "let me go away in peace with this warrior."

"It is that or death, Lodivarman," said King coldly.

"That or death," repeated Lodivarman in a half whisper. "Very well, then, you have won," he added presently. "Go in peace and take the girl with you." But even if he had not noted the cunning expression in the King's eyes, Gordon King would not have been deceived by this sudden acquiescence to his demand.

"You are wise, Lodivarman," he said—"wise to choose the easiest solution to your problem. I, too, must be guided by wisdom and by my knowledge of the ways of tyrants. Lie down upon the floor."

"Why?" demanded Lodivarman. "What would you do to me? Do you forget that I am a king, that my person is holy?"

"I remember that you are a man and that men may die if, living, they present an obstacle to another man who is desperate. Lodivarman, you must know that I am desperate."

"I have told you that you might go in peace," said the monarch. "Why would you humiliate me?"

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"I have no desire to humiliate you, Lodivarman. I only wish to assure myself that you will not be able to give the alarm before Fou-tan and I are beyond the walls of Lodidhapura. I would secure you so that you cannot leave this chamber; and as you have given orders that no one is to enter this part of the King's house until you summon, it will be morning, at least, before you can despatch warriors in pursuit of us."

"He speaks the truth," said Fou-tan to the King; "you will not be harmed."

For a moment Lodivarman stood silent as though in thought, and then suddenly and quite unexpectedly he leaped straight for King, striking up the warrior's spear and endeavouring to clutch him by the throat. Lodivarman was no coward.

So impetuous was the leper's charge that King was borne backward beneath the man's weight. His heel caught in the fold of a tiger skin upon the floor, and he fell heavily backward with Lodivarman upon him. The fingers of the leper were already at his throat; the rotting face was close to his; the odour of fetid breath was in his nostrils. But only for an instant did the Khmer King have an advantage. As he raised his voice to summon help, the hand of the American found his throat, choking out the sound even as it was born. Youth and strength and endurance all were upon the side of the younger man. Slowly he wormed his body from beneath that of the King; and then, kicking one of Lodivarman's braced feet from beneath him, he rolled the Khmer over upon his back and was upon him. Lodivarman's grip was wrenched from King's throat, and now the Khmer was gasping for breath as he fought, violently but futilely, to disengage himself from the clutches of the man upon him.

"Lie still," said King. "Do not force me to kill you." The repulsive sores upon the face of the King were directly beneath his eyes. Even in this tense moment that was so closely approaching tragedy, the habits of his medical training were still sufficiently strong to cause the American to give considerably more than cursory attention to these outward physical symptoms of the dread disease that had given Lodivarman the name of the Leper King; and what the doctor in him saw induced a keen regret that he could not investigate this strange case more fully.

At King's last command and threat, Lodivarman had ceased his struggles, and the American had relaxed his grasp upon the other's throat. "Are there any cords attached to the hangings in the room, Fou-tan?" he demanded of the girl.

"Yes, there are cords at the windows," replied she.

"Get them for me," said the American.

Quickly Fou-tan wrenched the cords loose from their fastenings and brought them to King, and with them the man bound the wrists and ankles of the Khmer King. So securely did he bind them and so tightly did he tie the knots that he had no fear that Lodivarman could release himself without aid; and now to be doubly certain that he could not summon assistance, King stuffed a gag of soft cloth into the mouth of his royal prisoner and bound it tightly there with another cord. Then he sprang to his feet.

"Come, Fou-tan," he said, "we have no time to lose; but wait, you cannot go abroad in that garb. You are to accompany me as a slave girl, not as an apsaras."

Fou-tan snatched off her ornate headdress and threw it upon the floor; then she loosened the golden girdle that held her voluminous skirt in place, and as it dropped to the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

floor King saw that she wore a silken sampot beneath it. Across a taboret was a long drape, the ends of which were spread upon the floor. This Fou-tan took and wound about her lithe form as a sarong.

"I am ready, Gordon King," she said.

"The ear-rings," he suggested, "the necklace, and your other wrist ornaments. They look too royal for a slave."

"You are right," she said, as she removed them.

King quickly extinguished the cressets, leaving the room in darkness. Then together the two groped their way to the door. Opening it a little, King looked about. The corridor was empty. He drew Fou-tan into it and closed the door behind him. To the next door in the corridor he stepped and tried it; it was not locked. He could just see the top of a flight of stone steps leading down into utter darkness. He wished that he had brought one of the cressets, but now it was too late. He drew Fou-tan within and closed the door, and now they could see nothing.

"Where does this lead?" asked Fou-tan in a whisper.

"It is the King's private passage to the garden," replied the American, "and if I have made no mistake in my calculations, the other end of it is guarded by a sentry who will pass us with a wink."

As they groped their way slowly down the steps and along the corridor King explained to Fou-tan the subterfuge he had adopted to obtain a place upon the guard that night and that he had particularly noticed the little door at the end of this wing of the palace and when the major-domo had told him of the private passage leading to the garden he had guessed that it ended at this very door. "The sentry there," he had concluded, "is from my own barracks and knows the story. That is why you must be a little slave girl tonight, Fou-tan."

"I do not mind being a slave girl—now," she said, and King felt the little fingers of the hand he held press his own more tightly.

They came at last to the end of the corridor. In the darkness King's fingers ran over the surface of the door in search of bars and bolts. The fastening, which he found at last, was massive but simple. It moved beneath the pressure of his hand with only a slight grating sound. He pushed the door slowly open; the fresh night air blew in upon them; the starlit heavens bathed the garden in gentle luminosity. Cautiously King crossed the threshold. He saw the warrior upon his post without, and instantly the man saw him.

"Who comes?" demanded the sentry, dropping his spear-point on a level with King's breast as he wheeled quickly toward him.

"It is I—King—of Varna's ten. I have found the slave girl of whom I told you, and I would walk in the garden with her for a few moments."

"I do not know you," snapped the warrior. "I never heard of you or your slave girl," and then it was that King realised that he had never seen this man before—that the sentries had been changed since he had entered the palace. His heart sank within him, yet he maintained a bold front.

"It will do no harm to let us pass for a while," he said, "you can see that I am a member of the guard, as otherwise I could not have gained access to the King's house."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"That may be true," replied the warrior, "but I have my orders that no one shall pass either in or out of this doorway without proper authority. I will summon an officer. If he wishes to let you pass, that is none of my affair."

Fou-tan had been standing at King's side. Now she moved slowly and languorously toward the sentry. Every undulating motion of her lithe body was provocative. She came very close to him and turned her beautiful face up toward his. Her eyes were dreamy wells of promise. "For me?" she asked in a soft, caressing voice. "For me, warrior, could you not be blind for a moment?"

"For you, yes," said the man huskily, "but you are not for me; you belong to him."

"I have a sister," suggested Fou-tan. "When I return within the King's house, perhaps she will come to this little door. What do you say, warrior?"

"Perhaps it can do no harm," he said hesitatingly. "How long will you remain in the garden?"

"We shall be in the garden only a few minutes," said King.

"I shall turn my back," said the sentry. "I have not seen you. Remember that, I have not seen you."

"Nor have we seen you," replied King.

"Do not forget your sister, little one," said the sentry, as he turned away from them and continued along his post, while Gordon King and Fou-tan merged with the shadows of the trees beyond.

Perhaps, hours later, when he was relieved, the sentry realised that he had been duped, but there were excellent reasons why he should keep a still tongue in his head, though he intended at first opportunity to look up this warrior who said that his name was King and demand an accounting from him. Perhaps, after all, the slave girl had had no sister, with which thought he turned on his pallet of straw and fell asleep.

True to their promise to the sentry, Fou-tan and King did not remain long within the garden of Lodivarman, the Leper King. Inasmuch as the walls had been built to keep people out of the royal enclosure, rather than to keep them in, it was not difficult to find a spot where they might be scaled, since in many places trees grew near, their branches overhanging.

Along the unlighted streets of the city proper the sight of a warrior and a girl was not so uncommon as to attract attention, and so it was with comparative ease that they made their way to the city's outer wall. Here, once more, a like condition prevailed. Low sheds and buildings abutted against the inner surface of the city's ramparts, and presently King found a place where they could ascend to the roof of a building and surmount the wall itself. The drop to the ground upon the outside, however, was considerable, and here they were confronted with the greatest danger that had menaced them since they had passed the sentry. For either one of them to suffer a sprained ankle or a broken leg at this time would have been fatal to both.

In the darkness King could not determine the nature of the ground at the foot of the wall; the light of the stars was not sufficient for that.

"We shall have to take a chance here, Fou-tan," he said.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"It is high, Gordon King; but if you tell me to I will jump."

"No," he said, "that is not necessary. I judge that the wall is about twenty feet high here. My spear is six feet long; your sarong must be at least eight feet, possibly longer."

"Yes, it is much too long," she said; "it was not intended for a sarong. But what has that to do with it?"

"I am going to tie one end of the sarong to the end of my spear; I shall tie a knot in the other end of the sarong. Do you think that you are strong enough to cling to that knot while I lower you as near the ground as I can?"

"I am very strong," said Fou-tan, "and desperation lends even greater strength." As she spoke she commenced to remove her sarong, and a moment later King was lowering her slowly over the edge of the wall.

"When I have lowered you as far as I can," he whispered in her ear, "I shall tell you to drop. After you have done so, stand quickly to one side, and I will drop my spear. Then you must take it away so that I will not fall upon it; and also if the ground is rough, smooth it a little for me."

"Yes," she said, and King lowered her away down the outside of the wall of Lodidhapura.

Presently he was clinging only to the end of the spear and was leaning far over the edge of the wall. "Drop," he said in a low voice. Instantly the pull of her weight was gone from the spear handle in his hand. "Are you all right?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes," she replied. "Drop the spear," and then an instant later: "the grass is thick and soft here."

King lowered himself over the edge of the wall and hung an instant by his fingers. Then he released his hold and dropped. As he rolled over in the tall grass, considerably jarred but unhurt, Fou-tan was at his side. "You are all right, Gordon King?" she demanded. "You are not hurt?"

"I am all right," he said.

"I shall sacrifice a bullock in the temple of Siva when we reach Pnom Dhek," she said.

"For your sake, Fou-tan, I hope that it will not be long before you are able to sacrifice the bullock, but we are not at Pnom Dhek yet; I do not even know where it is."

"I do," replied the girl.

"In what direction?" he asked.

She pointed. "There," she said, "but the way is long and difficult."

Near them was a group of native huts, clustered close to the foot of the wall, and so they moved out straight across the clearing to the edge of the jungle and then, turning, paralleled the jungle until they had passed the city.

"When we were brought into Lodidhapura I saw an avenue leading into the jungle somewhere in this direction," said King.

"Yes," replied Fou-tan, "but that does not lead to Pnom Dhek."

"Which is the reason that I wish to find it," said King. "The pursuit will be directed straight in the direction of Pnom Dhek, you may be assured. Men upon elephants and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

upon horses will travel after us much more rapidly than we can travel and we shall be overtaken if we take the road toward Pnom Dhek. We must go in some other direction and hide in the jungle for days, perhaps, before we may dare to approach Pnom Dhek."

"I do not care," she said, "and I shall not be afraid if you are with me, Gordon King."

It was not long before they found the road that he sought. In the open starlit night the transition to the jungle was depressing and, too, as they both realised, it was highly dangerous. All about them were the noises of the gloomy nocturnal forest: the mysterious rustling of underbrush as some beast passed on padded feet, a coughing growl in the distance, a snarl and a scream, followed by a long silence that was more terrifying than the noise.

A few months ago King would have considered their position far more precarious than he did this night, but now long familiarity with the jungle had so inured him to its dangers that he had unwittingly acquired that tendency to fatalism that is a noticeable characteristic of primitive people who live constantly beneath the menace of beasts of prey. He was, however, no less aware of the dangers that confronted them, but held them the lesser of two evils. To remain in the neighbourhood of Lodidhapura would most certainly result in their early capture and subject them to a fate more merciless and more cruel than any which might waylay them along the dark aisles of the forest. Propinquity had considerably altered his estimation of the great cats; whereas formerly he had thought of them as the fearless exterminators of mankind; he had since learned that not all of them are mankillers and that more often did they avoid man than pursue him. The chances, then, that they might come through the night without attack were greatly in their favour; but should they meet a tiger or a leopard or a panther which, because of hunger, old age, or viciousness, should elect to attack them, their doom might well be sealed; and whether they were moving away from Lodidhapura upon the ground or hiding in a tree, they would be almost equally at the mercy of one or another of these fierce carnivores.

The avenue that they were following, which entered the jungle from Lodidhapura, ran broad and clear for a considerable distance into the forest, dwindling at last to little more than an ordinary game-trail. To elude their pursuers, they must leave it; but that they might not attempt until daylight, since to strike out blindly into the trackless jungle, buried in the impenetrable gloom of night, must almost assuredly have spelled disaster.

"Even if they find Lodivarman before morning," he said, "I doubt that they will commence their search for us before daylight."

"They will be ordered out in pursuit the instant that Lodivarman can issue a command," replied Fou-tan; "but there is little likelihood that anyone will dare to risk his anger by approaching the apartment in which he lies until his long silence has aroused suspicion. If your bonds hold and he is unable to remove the gag from his mouth, I doubt very much that he will be discovered before noon. His people fear his anger, which is quick and merciless, and there is only one man in all Lodidhapura who would risk incurring it by entering that apartment before Lodivarman summoned him."

"And who is that?" asked King.

"Vay Thon, the high priest of Siva," replied the girl.

"If I am missed and the word reaches the ears of Vay Thon," said King, "it is likely

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

that his suspicion may be aroused."

"Why?" asked Fou-tan.

"Because I talked with him this afternoon, and I could see that he guessed what was in my heart. It was he who told me that Lodivarman would send for you to-night. It was Vay Thon who warned me to attempt no rash deed."

"He does not love Lodivarman," said the girl, "and it may be that if he guessed the truth he might be silent, for he has been kind to me; and I know that he liked you."

For hour after hour the two groped their way along the dark trail, aided now by the dim light of the moon that the canopy of foliage above blocked and diffused until that which reached the jungle floor could not be called light at all, but rather a lesser degree of darkness.

With the passing of the hours King realised that Fou-tan's steps were commencing to lag. He tuned his own then to suit hers and, walking close beside her, supported her with his arm. She seemed so small and delicate and unsuited to an ordeal like this that the man marvelled at her stamina. More of a hot-house plant than a girl of flesh and blood seemed Fou-tan of Pnom Dhek, and yet she was evincing the courage and endurance of a man. He recalled that not once during the night had she voiced any fear of the jungle, not even when great beasts had passed so close to them that they could almost hear their breathing. If Khmer slaves were of this stock, to what noble heights of courage must the masters achieve!

"You are very tired, Fou-tan," he said; "we shall rest presently."

"No," she replied. "Do not stop on my account."

If you would not rest upon your own account, it must be that you do not think it wise to do so; that I am with you should make no difference. When you feel the need of rest and believe that it is safe to rest, then I may rest also, but not until then.

Stealthily the dawn, advance guard of the laggard day, crept slowly through the jungle, pushing back the impenetrable shadows of the night. Shadowy trees emerged from the darkness; armies of gaunt grey boles marched in endless procession slowly by them; the trail that had been but a blank wall of darkness before projected itself forward to the next turn; the hideous night lay behind them, and a new hope was born within their bosoms. It was time now to leave the trail and search for a hiding-place, and conditions were particularly favourable at this spot, since the underbrush was comparatively scant.

Turning abruptly to the left, King struck off at right angles to the trail; and for another hour the two pushed onward into the untracked mazes of the forest. This last hour was particularly difficult, for there was no trail and the ground rose rapidly, suggesting to King that they were approaching mountains. There were numerous outcroppings of rocks; and at length they came to the edge of a gorge, in the bottom of which ran a stream of pure water.

"The gods have been good to us," exclaimed King.

"I have been praying to them all night," said Fou-tan.

The little stream had cut deeply into its limestone bed; but at last they found a way down to the water, where the cool and refreshing liquid gave them renewed strength and hope.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The evidences of erosion in the limestone about them suggested to King that a little search might reveal a safe and adequate hiding-place. Fortunately the water in the stream was low, giving them dry footing along its side as they followed the gorge upward; nor had they gone far before they discovered a location that was ideal for their purpose. Here the stream made a sharp bend that was almost a right angle; and where the waters had rushed for countless ages against the base of a limestone cliff, they had eaten their way far into it, hollowing out a sanctuary where the two fugitives would be safe from observation from above.

Leaving Fou-tan in the little grotto, King crossed the stream and gathered an armful of dry grasses that grew above the high water-line upon the opposite side. After several trips he was able to make a reasonably comfortable bed for each of them.

"Sleep now," he said to Fou-tan; "and when you are rested, I shall sleep."

The girl would have demurred, wishing him to sleep first; but even as she voiced her protest, exhaustion overcame her and she sank into a profound slumber. Seated with his back against the limestone wall of their retreat, King sought desperately to keep awake; but the monotonous sound of the running water, which drowned all other sounds, acted as a soporific, which, combined with outraged Nature's craving for rest, made the battle he was waging a difficult one. Twice he dozed and then, disgusted with himself, he arose and paced to and fro the length of their sanctuary, but the instant that he sat down again he was gone.

It was mid-afternoon when King awoke with a start. He had been the victim of a harrowing dream, so real that even as he awoke he grasped his spear and leaped to his feet, but there was no danger menacing. He listened intently, but the only sound came from the leaping waters of the stream.

Fou-tan opened her eyes and looked at him. "What is it?" she asked.

He grimaced in self-disgust. "I slept at my post," he said. "I have been asleep a long time, and I have just awakened."

"I am glad," she said with a smile. "I hope that you have slept for a long time."

"I have slept almost as long as you have, Foutan," he replied; "but suppose that they had come while I slept."

"They did not come, however," she reminded him.

"Well, right or wrong, we have both slept now," he said, "and my next business is to obtain food."

"There is plenty in the forest," she said.

"Yes, I noted it as we came this way in the morning."

"Will it be safe to go out and search for food?" asked the girl.

"We shall have to take the chance," he replied. "We must eat and we cannot find food at night. We shall have to go together, Fou-tan, as I cannot risk leaving you alone for a moment."

As King and Fou-tan left their hiding-place and started down the gorge toward a place where they could clamber out of it into the forest in search of food, a creature at the summit of the cliff upon the opposite side of the stream crouched behind a low bush and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

watched them. Out of small eyes, deep-set beneath a mass of tangled hair, the creature watched every movement of the two; and when they had passed, it followed them stealthily, stalking them as a tiger might have stalked. But this was no tiger; it was a man—a huge, hulking brute of a man, standing well over six-feet-six on its great flat feet. Its only apparel was a G string, made from the skin of a wild animal. It wore no ornaments, but it carried weapons—a short spear, a bow, and arrows.

The jungle lore that the American had learned under the tutorage of Che stood him in good stead now, for it permitted him quickly to locate edible fruit and tubers without waste of time and with a minimum of effort. Fou-tan, city-bred, had but a hazy and most impractical knowledge of the flora of the jungle. She knew the tall, straight teak standing leafless now in the dry season and the India-rubber tree; and with almost childish delight she recognised the leathery laurel-like leaves of the tree from whose gum resin gamboge is secured; the tall, flowering stems of the cardamon she knew too; but the sum total of her knowledge would not have given sustenance to a canary in the jungle. It was therefore that King's efficiency in this matter filled her with awe and admiration. Her dark eyes followed his every move; and when he had collected all of the food that they could conveniently carry and they had turned their steps back toward their hiding-place, Fou-tan was bubbling over with pride and confidence and happiness. Perhaps it was as well that she did not see the uncouth figure hiding in the underbrush as they passed.

Back in their retreat they partially satisfied their hunger with such of the food as did not require cooking. "To-night we can have a fire," said King, "and roast some of these tubers. It would not be safe now, for the smoke might be seen for a considerable distance; but at night they will not be searching for us, and the light of a small fire will never escape from this gorge."

After they had eaten, King took his spear and walked down to the stream where he had seen fish jumping. He was prompted more by a desire to pass away the time than by any hope of success in this piscatorial adventure, but so numerous were the fish and so unafraid that he succeeded in spearing two with the utmost ease while Fou-tan stood at his elbow applauding him with excited little exclamations and squeals of delight.

King had never been any less sensitive to the approbation of the opposite sex than any other normal man, but never, he realised, had praise sounded more sweetly in his ears than now. There was something so altogether sincere in Fou-tan's praise that it never even remotely suggested adulation. He had always found her such an altogether forthright little person that he could never doubt her sincerity.

"Now we shall have a feast," she exclaimed, as they carried the fishes back into their grotto. "It is a good thing for me that you are here, Gordon King, and not another."

"Why, Fou-tan?" he asked.

"Imagine Bharata Rahon or any of the others being faced with the necessity of finding food for me here in the jungle!" she exclaimed. "Why, I should either have starved to death or have been poisoned by their ignorance and stupidity. No, there is no one like Gordon King, as Fou-tan, his slave, should know."

"Do not call yourself that," he said. "You are not my slave."

"Let us play that I am," she said. "I like it. A slave is great in the greatness of his

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

master; therefore, it can be no disgrace to be the slave of Gordon King."

"If I had not found you here in the jungles of Cambodia," he said; "I could have sworn that you are Irish."

"Irish?" she asked. "What is Irish?"

"The Irish are a people who live upon a little island far, far away. They have a famous stone there, and when one has kissed this stone he cannot help thereafter speaking in terms of extravagant praise of all whom he meets. It is said that all of the Irish have kissed this stone."

"I do not have to kiss a stone to tell the truth to you, Gordon King," she said. "I do not always say nice things to people, but I like to say them to you."

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know, Gordon King," said Fou-tan, and her eyes dropped from his level gaze.

They were sitting upon the dry grasses that he had gathered for their beds. King sat now in silence, looking at the girl. For the thousandth time he was impressed by her great beauty, and then the face of another girl arose in a vision between them. It was the face of Susan Anne Prentice. With a short laugh King turned his gaze down toward the stream; while once again, upon the opposite cliff-top, the little eyes of the great man watched them.

"Why do you laugh, Gordon King?" asked Foutan, looking up suddenly.

"You would not understand, Fou-tan," he said. He had been thinking of what Susan Anne would say could she have knowledge of the situation in which he then was—a situation which he realised was not only improbable but impossible. Here was he, Gordon King, a graduate physician, a perfectly normal product of the twentieth century, sitting almost naked under a big rock with a little slave girl of a race that had disappeared hundreds of years before. That in itself was preposterous. But there was another matter that was even less credible; he realised that he enjoyed the situation, and most of all he enjoyed the company of the little slave girl.

"You are laughing at me, Gordon King," said Fou-tan, "and I do not like to be laughed at."

"I was not laughing at you, Fou-tan," he replied. "I could not laugh at you. I—"

"You what?" she demanded.

"I could not laugh at you," he replied lamely.

"You said that once before, Gordon King," she reminded him. "You started to say something else. What was it?"

For a moment he was silent. "I have forgotten, Fou-tan," he said then.

His eyes were turned away from her as she looked at him keenly in silence for some time. Then a slow smile lighted her face and she broke into a little humming song.

The man upon the opposite cliff withdrew stealthily until he was out of sight of the two in the gorge below him. Then he arose to an erect position and crept softly away into the forest. Ready in his hands were his bow and an arrow. For all his great size and weight he moved without noise, his little eyes shifting constantly from side to side. Suddenly,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and so quickly that one could scarcely follow the movements of his hands, an arrow sped from his bow, and an instant later he stepped forward and picked up a large rat that had been transfixed by his missile. The creature moved slowly onward, and presently a little monkey swung through the trees above him. Again the bowstring twanged, and the little monkey hurtled to the ground at the feet of the primitive hunter. Squatting on his haunches the man-thing ate the rat raw; then he carried the monkey back to the edge of the gorge, and after satisfying himself that the two were still there he fell to upon the principal item of his dinner; and he was still eating when darkness came.

Fou-tan had not broken King's embarrassed silence, but presently the man arose. "Where are you going, Gordon King?" she asked.

"There is some driftwood lodged upon the opposite bank, left there by last season's flood waters. We shall need it for our cooking fire to-night."

"I will go with you and help you," said Fou-tan, and together they crossed the little stream and gathered the dry wood for their fire.

From Che and Kangrey the American had learned to make fire without matches; and he soon had a little blaze burning, far back beneath the shelter of their overhanging rock. He had cleaned and washed the fish and now proceeded to grill them over the fire, while Fou-tan roasted two large tubers impaled upon the ends of sticks.

"I would not exchange this for the palace of a king, Gordon King," she said.

"Nor I, Fou-tan," he replied.

"Are you happy, Gordon King?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "And you, Fou-tan, are you happy?"

She nodded her head. "It is because you and I are together," she said simply.

"We come from opposite ends of the earth, Foutan," he said, "we are separated by centuries of time, we have nothing in common, your world and my world are as remote from one another as the stars; and yet, Fou-tan, it seems as though I had known you always. It does not seem possible that I have lived all my life up to now without even knowing that you existed."

"I have felt that too, Gordon King," said the girl. "I cannot understand it, but it is so. However, you are wrong in one respect."

"And what is that?" he asked.

"You said that we had nothing in common. We have."

"What is it?" demanded King.

Fou-tan shuddered. "The leprosy," she said. "He touched us both. We shall both have it."

Gordon King laughed. "We shall never contract leprosy from Lodivarman," he said. "I am a doctor. I know."

"Why shall we not?" she demanded.

"Because Lodivarman is not a leper," replied the American.

From the opposite side of the gorge the brute, gnawing upon a leg bone of the monkey, watched the two below. He saw the fire kindled and it troubled him. He was afraid of fire. Muddily, in his undeveloped brain, it represented the personification of some ma-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

lign power. The brute knew no god; but he knew that there were forces that brought pain, disaster, death, and that oftentimes these forces were invisible. The visible causes of such effects were the enemies he had met in the jungle in the form of men or of beasts; therefore, it was natural that he should endow the invisible causes of similar effects with the physical attributes of the enemies that he could see. He peopled the jungle accordingly with invisible men and invisible beasts that wrought pain, disaster, and death. These enemies he held in far greater fear than those that were visible to him. Fire, he knew, was the work of one of these dread creatures, and the very sight of it made him uncomfortable.

The brute was not hungry; he harboured no animosity for the two creatures he stalked; he was motivated by a more powerful urge than hunger or hate.

He had seen the girl!

The fire annoyed him and kept him at bay; but time meant little to the brute. He saw that the two had made beds, and he guessed that they would sleep where they were during the night. On the morrow they would go out after food, and there would be no fire with them. The brute was content to wait until the morrow. He found some tall grass and, getting upon his hands and knees, turned about several times, as bedding dogs are wont to do, and then lay down. He had flattened the grasses so that they all lay in one direction, and when he turned upon his bed he always turned in that direction, so that the sharp ends of the grasses did not stick into his flesh. Perhaps he had learned this trick from the wild dogs, or perhaps the wild dogs first learned it from man. Who knows?

In the darkness Fou-tan and King sat upon their beds and talked. Fou-tan was full of questions. She wanted to know all about the strange country from which King came. Most of the things he told her she could not understand; but her questions were quite often directed upon subjects that were well within her ken—there are some matters that are eternal; time does not alter them.

"Are the women of your country beautiful?" she asked.

"Some of them," replied the man.

"Have you a wife, Gordon King?" The question was voiced in a whisper.

"No, Fou-tan."

"But you love someone," she insisted, for love is so important to a woman that she cannot imagine a life devoid of love.

"I have been too busy to fall in love," he replied good-naturedly.

"You are not very busy now," suggested Foutan.

"I think I shall be a very busy man for the next few days trying to get you back to Pnom Dhek," he assured her.

Fou-tan was silent. It was so dark that he could scarcely see her. But he could feel her presence near him, and it seemed to exert as strong an influence upon him as might have physical contact. He had recognised the power of that indefinable thing called personality when he had talked with people and looked into their eyes; but he never had had it reach out through the dark and lay hold of him as though with warm fingers of flesh and blood, and King found the sensation most disquieting.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

They lay in silence upon their beds of dry grasses, each occupied with his own thoughts. The heat of the jungle day was rising slowly from the narrow gorge, and a damp chill was replacing it.

The absolute darkness which surrounded them was slightly mitigated in their immediate vicinity by an occasional flame rising from the embers of their dying fire as some drying twigs of their fuel ignited. King was thinking of the girl at his side, of the responsibility which her presence entailed, and of the duty that he owed to her and to himself. He tried not to think about her, but that he found impossible, and the more that she was in his mind the stronger became the realisation of the hold that she had obtained upon him; that the sensation that she animated within him was love seemed incredibly preposterous. He tried to assure himself that it was but an infatuation engendered by her beauty and propinquity, and he girded himself to conquer his infatuation that he might perform the duty that had devolved upon him in so impersonal a way that there might be no regret.

In order to fortify this noble decision he cast Foutan from his mind entirely and occupied himself with thoughts of his friends in far-away America. In retrospect he laughed and danced again with Susan Anne Prentice; he listened to her pleasant cultured voice and enjoyed once more the sweet companionship of the girl who was to him all that a beloved sister might have been; and then a little sigh came from the bed of grasses at his side, and the vision of Susan Anne Prentice faded into oblivion.

Again there was a long silence, broken only by the murmur of the tumbling stream.

"Gordon King!" It was just a whisper.

"What is it, Fou-tan?"

"I am afraid, Gordon King," said the girl. How like a little child in the dark she sounded. Before he could answer, there came the sound of a soft thud down the gorge and the rattle of loose earth falling from above.

"What was that?" asked Fou-tan in a frightened whisper. "Something is coming, Gordon King. Look!"

Silently the man rose to his feet, grasping his spear in readiness. Down the gorge he saw two blazing points of flame; and quickly stepping to their fire, he placed dry twigs upon the embers, blowing upon them gently until they burst into flame. At a little distance those two glowing spots burned out of the darkness.

King piled more wood upon the fire until it blazed up bravely, illuminating their little grotto and revealing Fou-tan sitting up upon her bed of grasses, gazing with wide horror-filled eyes at those two silent, ominous harbingers of death fixed so menacingly upon them. "My Lord the Tiger!" she whispered; and her low, tense tones were vibrant with all the inherent horror of the great beast that had been passed down to her by countless progenitors, for whom My Lord the Tiger had constituted life's greatest menace.

Primitive creatures, constantly surrounded by lethal dangers, sleep lightly. The descent of the great cat into the gorge, followed by the sounds of the falling earth and stones it had dislodged, brought to his feet the sleeping brute upon the opposite summit. Thinking that the noise might have come from the quarry in the gorge below, the creature moved quickly to the edge of the cliff and looked down; and as the mounting

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

blazes of King's fire illuminated the scene, the brute saw the great tiger standing with upraised head, watching the man and the woman in their rocky retreat.

Here was an interloper that aroused the ire of the brute; here was a deadly enemy about to seize that which the brute had already marked as his own. The creature selected a heavy arrow, the heaviest arrow that he carried, and, fitting it to his bow, he bent the sturdy weapon until the point of the arrow touched the fingers of his bow-hand; then he let drive at a point just behind the shoulders of the tiger.

What happened thereafter happened very quickly. The arrow drove through to the great cat's lungs; the shock, the surprise and the pain brought instant reaction. Not having sensed the presence of any other formidable creature than those before him, My Lord the Tiger must naturally have assumed that they were the authors of his hurt. This supposition, at least, seemed likely if judged by that which immediately occurred.

With a hideous roar, with blazing eyes, with wide distended jaws, revealing gleaming fangs, the great cat charged straight for King. Into the circle of firelight it bounded like a personification of some hideous force of destruction.

Little Fou-tan, on her feet beside King, seized a blazing brand from the fire and hurled it full into the face of the charging beast; but the tiger was too far gone in pain and rage longer to harbour fear of aught.

King's spear-arm went back. Through his mind flashed the recollection of the other tiger that he had killed with a single spear cast. He had known then that he had been for the instant the favoured child of Fortune. The laws of chance would never countenance a repetition of that amazing stroke of luck; yet there was naught that he could do but try.

He held his nerves and muscles in absolute control, the servants of his iron will. Every faculty of mind and body was centred upon the accuracy and the power of his spear-arm. Had he given thought to what might follow, his nerves must necessarily have faltered, but he did not. Cool and collected, he waited until he knew that he could not miss nor wait another moment. Then the bronze skin of his spear-arm flashed in the light of the fire, and at the same instant he swept Fou-tan to him with his left arm and leaped to one side.

Not even My Lord the Tiger could have acted with greater celerity, calmness, and judgment. A low grunt of surprise and admiration burst from the lips of the brute watching from the summit of the opposite cliff.

The charge of the tiger carried it full into the fire, scattering the burning branches in all directions. The dry grasses of the beds burst into flame. Blinded and terrified, the tiger looked about futilely for his prey; but King had leaped quickly across the stream to the opposite side of the gorge, having learned by experience that a creature near the fire can see nothing in the outer darkness. The great cat, clawing and biting at the spear protruding from its chest, rent the air with its screams of pain and growls of rage. Suddenly it was quiet, standing like a yellow and black statue carved from gold and ebony; then it took a few steps forward, sagged, and slumped lifeless to the ground.

Gordon King felt very weak in the knees, so weak that he sat down quite suddenly. He had rung the bell twice in succession, but he could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes. Fou-tan came and sat down close beside him and rested her cheek against

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

his arm. "My Gordon King!" she murmured softly.

Almost without volition he put his arm about her. "My Fou-tan!" he said. The girl snuggled close in his embrace.

For a time they sat watching the tiger, hesitating to approach lest there might remain a spark of life within the great form, each knowing that one little instant of life would be sufficient to destroy them both were they near the beast; but the great cat never moved again.

The dissipated fire was dying down, and realising more than ever now the necessity for keeping it up, King and Fou-tan arose and, crossing the stream, scraped together the remaining embers of their fire and rebuilt it with fresh wood.

From the cliff above the brute watched them, and once again grunted his admiration as he saw King withdraw his spear from the body of the fallen tiger. Placing one foot against the breast of the great beast, the American was forced to exert every ounce of his weight and strength to withdraw the weapon, so deeply was it embedded in the bone and sinew of its victim.

"I am afraid that we shall not get much sleep tonight, Fou-tan," said King as he returned to the fire.

"I am not sleepy," replied the girl; "I could not sleep, and then, too, it is commencing to get cold. I would rather sit here by the fire until morning. I would rather have my eyes open than closed in the night when My Lord the Tiger walks abroad."

Once more they sat down side by side, their backs against the rocky wall that had been warmed by the heat of the nearby fire.

The brute, realising that they had settled themselves for the night, returned to his primitive bed and settled himself once more for sleep.

Fou-tan cuddled close to Gordon King; his arm was about her. He felt her soft hair against his cheek. He drew her closer to him. "Fou-tan!" he said.

"Yes, Gordon King, what is it?" she asked. He noted that her voice trembled.

"I love you," said Gordon King.

A sigh that came in little gasps was his reply. He felt her heart pounding against his side.

A soft arm crept upward to encircle his neck, drawing him gently down to the sweet face turned toward his. Eyes, dimmed with unshed tears, gazed into his eyes. Trembling lips fluttered beneath his lips, and then he crushed her to him in the first kiss of love.

The flower-like beauty of the girl, her softness, her helplessness, combined with the exaltation of this, his first love, enveloped Fou-tan with an aura of sanctity that rendered her almost an object of veneration in the eyes of the man—a high priestess enshrined in the Holy of Holies of his heart. He marvelled that he had won the love of so glorious a creature. The little slave girl became an angel, and he her paladin. In this thought lay the secret of King's attitude toward Fou-tan. He was glad that she was small and helpless, for he liked to think of himself as her champion and protector. He liked to feel that the safety of the girl he loved lay in his hands and that he was physically and morally competent to discharge the obligations that Fate had reposed within him.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Despite the fact that she was soft and small, Foutan was not without self-reliance and courage, as she had amply proved when she had run away from the palace of Lodivarman and risked the perils of the savage jungle; yet she was still so wholly feminine that she found her greatest happiness in the protection of the man she loved.

"I am very happy," whispered Fou-tan.

"And so am I," said King, "happier than I have ever been before in my life, but now we must make our plans all anew."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"We may not go to Pnom Dhek now. We must find our way out of the jungle so that I can take you to my own country."

"Why?" she demanded.

"Before I answer you," he replied, "there is one question that I have not asked but that you must answer before we make our plans for the future."

"What is that?" she asked.

"Will you be my wife, Fou-tan?"

"Oh, Gordon King, I have answered that already, for I have told you that I love you. Fou-tan would not tell any man that whom she could not or would not take as her husband; but what has that to do with our returning to Pnom Dhek?"

"It was everything to do with it," replied King, "because I will not take the woman who is to be my wife back into slavery."

She looked up into his face, her eyes alight with a new happiness and understanding. "Now I may never doubt that you love me, Gordon King," she said.

He looked at her questioningly. "I do not understand what you mean," he said.

"Though you thought that I was born a slave, you asked me to be your wife," she said.

"You told me from the first that you were a slave girl," he reminded her.

"I was a slave girl in Lodidhapura," she explained, "but in Pnom Dhek I am no slave. I must return there to my father's house. It is my duty. When the King learns what a great warrior you are, he will give you a place in his guard. Then you will be able to take a wife, and, perhaps, my father will not object."

"And if he does?" asked King.

"Let us not think of that," replied Fou-tan.

As the night wore on, a slow rain commenced to fall, herald of the coming rainy season. King kept the fire replenished, and its heat warmed them as they sat and talked of their future, or spoke in half-awed whispers of the transcendent happiness that had come into their lives.

Before dawn the rain ceased and the skies cleared, and when the sun rose he looked upon a steaming jungle, where strange odours, long imprisoned by drought, filled the air as they wandered through the forest.

King rose and stretched himself. Near him the carcass of the great beast he had slain aroused within him regret that he must leave such a trophy to the carrion creatures or to decay.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

From the tiger's back protruded the feathered shaft of an arrow. King was puzzled. He tugged upon the missile and withdrew it. It was a crude thing—much more primitive than those made by Che. It created a mystery that appeared little likely of solution. The best that he could do was guess that the tiger had carried it for some time before he attacked them. Then, for the time, he forgot the matter, which later was to be recalled in poignant grief.

Across the gorge the brute bestirred himself. He had lain quietly throughout the rain, keeping the spot beneath him dry. Physical discomfort meant little to him; he was accustomed to it. He arose, and, like King, stretched himself. Then he crept to the edge of the gorge and looked down at the man and the woman.

Fou-tan, who had been dozing, awoke now and rose to her feet. With the undulating grace of youth and health and physical perfection she came and stood beside King. She leaned close against the man, who put an arm about her and, bending, kissed her upturned mouth. The brute moistened his thick lips with a red tongue.

"And now," said King, "I am going up into the forest to get some more fruit. It will be a light breakfast, but better than none; and I do not dare build up the fire again by daylight."

"While you are gone I shall bathe myself in the stream," said Fou-tan; "it will refresh me."

"I am afraid to leave you here alone," said King.

"There is no danger," replied Fou-tan. "The beasts are not hunting now, and there is little likelihood that the soldiers who are searching for us have broken camp so early. No, I shall remain here. Let me have my bath, Gordon King, and do not return too quickly."

As King walked down the gorge to the place where he could ascend into the forest, the brute upon the opposite side watched his every move and then proceeded quickly up the farther bank of the gorge in the opposite direction from that taken by King. There was no trail in the jungle that the brute did not know, so that he was aware of a place where he might easily descend into the gorge a short distance above the spot where Fou-tan bathed.

The girl wore only two garments beside her sandals—a silken sampot and the makeshift sarong—so that scarcely was King out of sight before she was splashing in the cold waters of the stream. The temperature of the water that came down from the high hills, coupled with her fear that King might return too soon, prompted her to haste. Having no towel, she used one end of the sarong to dry herself, adjusted her sampot and wound the sarong about her lithe body. Then she stood looking down the gorge in the direction from which King would return. Her heart was filled with her new happiness, so that it was with difficulty that she restrained her lips from song.

From up the gorge, behind her, crept the brute. Even if he had approached noisily, the rushing waters would have drowned the sound, but it was not the way of the brute to move noisily. Like the other carnivores, stealth was habitual to him. The brute was the personification of the cunning and malignity of the tiger; but there the parallel ceased, for the tiger was beautiful and the brute was hideous.

It is remarkable that there should be so many more beautiful creatures in the world

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

than man, which suggests a doubt of man's boast that he is made in the image of God. There are those who believe that the image of God must transcend in its beauty the finite conceptions of man. If that be true and God chose to create any animal in His own likeness, man must have trailed at the far end of that celestial beauty contest.

The brute crept stealthily down upon the unsuspecting girl. He rounded the corner of a cliff and saw her standing with her back toward him. He moved swiftly now, crouched like a charging tiger, yet his naked feet gave forth no sound; while Foutan, with half-closed eyes and smiling lips, dreamed of the future that love held in store.

The brute sprang close behind her. A filthy, calloused paw was clapped across her mouth. A rough and powerful arm encircled her waist. She was whirled from her feet, her cries stifled in her throat, as the brute wheeled and ran swiftly up the gorge, bearing his prize.

King quickly found the fruit he sought, but he loitered in returning to give Fou-tan an opportunity to complete her toilet. As he idled slowly back to the gorge, his mind was occupied with plans for the future. He was considering the advisability of remaining in hiding where they were for several days on the chance that the soldiers of Lodivarman might in the meantime give up the search and return to Lodidhapura. He determined that they might explore the gorge further in the hope of finding a safer and more comfortable retreat, where they might be less at the mercy of night prowlers and even more securely hidden from searchers than they were at present. He was also moved by the prospect of a few idyllic days during which there would be no one in the world but himself and Foutan.

Filled with enthusiasm for his heaven-sent plan, King descended into the gorge and approached the now hallowed precincts of his greatest happiness; but as he rounded the last bend he saw that Foutan was not there. Perhaps she had gone farther up the stream to bathe. He called her name aloud, but there was no reply. Again he called, raising his voice, but still there was only silence. Now he became alarmed and, running quickly forward, searched about for some sign or clue to her whereabouts; nor had he long to search. In the soft earth, damp from the recent rain, he saw the imprints of a huge foot—the great bare foot of a man. He saw where the prints had stopped and turned, and it was easy to follow them up the gorge. Casting aside the fruit that he had gathered, he hastened along the well-marked trail, his mind a fiery furnace of fear and rage, his heart a cold clod in his leaden breast.

Now, quite suddenly, he recalled the arrow he had found embedded behind the shoulders of the tiger that he had killed. He recalled the beast's sudden scream of rage and pain as it had charged so unexpectedly toward him, and quite accurately he reconstructed the whole scene—the man had been spying upon them from the top of the gorge; he had seen the tiger and had shot it to save his quarry to himself; then he had waited until King had left Foutan alone; the rest was plainly discernible in the footprints that he followed. He was confident that this was no soldier of Lodivarman; the crude arrow refuted that idea, as did the imprints of the great bare feet. But what sort of man was it and why had he stolen Fou-tan? The answer to that question goaded King to greater speed.

A short distance up the gorge King discovered where the tracks turned to the right, up the bed of a dry wash and thus to the level of the forest above. He gave thanks now for

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the providential ram that rendered the spoor easily followed. He knew that the abductor could not be far ahead, and he was sure that he could overtake him before harm could befall Fou-tan. However, as he hastened on, he was chilled by the thought that no matter how plain the spoor, the necessity for keeping it always in sight could but retard his speed; and his fear was that the slight delay might permit the man to outdistance him; and then he came to a patch of rocky ground where the trail, becoming immediately faint, suddenly disappeared entirely. Sick with apprehension, the American was forced to stop and search for a continuation of the tracks, and when, at last, he found them he knew that his quarry had gamed greatly upon him during this enforced delay.

Again he sped along as rapidly as he could through a forest unusually devoid of underbrush. As he advanced he presently became aware of a new sound mingling with the subdued daylight noises of the jungle. It was a sound that he could not identify, but there was something ominous about it; and then, quite suddenly, he came upon the authors of it—great grey bulks looming among the boles of the trees directly in his path.

Under other circumstances he would have halted or, at least, changed his route; and had he reflected even for an instant, his better judgment now would have prompted him to do the latter; but uppermost in his mind and entirely dominating him was the great fear that he felt for Fou-tan's safety; and when he saw this obstacle looming menacingly before him, his one thought was to override it by sheer effrontery that it might not even delay him, much less thwart him in the pursuit of his object.

Had he been vouchsafed from his insanity even a single brief moment of lucidity, he would have avoided those ominous bulks moving restlessly to and fro among the boles of the giant trees, for even at the best wild elephants are nervous and short-tempered; and these, obviously disconcerted and suspicious by reason of some recent occurrences, were in a particularly hysterical and ugly mood. There were young calves among them and, therefore, watchful and irritable mothers; while the great bulls, aroused and on guard, were in no mood to be further provoked.

A huge bull, his ears outspread, his tail erect, wheeled toward the advancing man. The forest trembled to his mad trumpeting, and in that instant King realised for the first time the deadly peril of his position and knew that it would serve Fou-tan nothing were he to rush headlong into that inevitable death.

As the hideous creature bore her on, Fou-tan struggled to release herself; but she was utterly helpless in the Herculean grasp of her gigantic captor. She tried to wrench the creature's hand from her mouth that she might scream a warning to King, but even in this she was doomed to failure.

The creature had at first been carrying her under one arm, with her face down; but after he reached the floor of the forest he swung her lightly up in front of him, carrying her so that she had a clear view of his face; and at sight of it her heart sank within her. It was a hideous face, with thick lips and protruding teeth, great ears that flapped as the creature ran, and a low, receding forehead hidden by filthy, tangled hair that almost met the bushy, protruding eyebrows, beneath which gleamed wicked, bloodshot eyes.

It did not require a second look to convince Foutan that she had fallen into the hands of one of the dread Yeacks. Notwithstanding the fact that she had never before seen one

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of these ogre people, nor had known anyone who had, she was nevertheless as positive in her identification as though she had come in daily contact with them all her life, so strongly implanted in the mind of man are the superstitions of childhood. What else, indeed, could this creature be but a Yeack?

The horror of her situation was augmented by its contrast to the happy state from which it had snatched her. Had her Gordon King been there she would have been sure of rescue, so absolute was her conviction of his prowess. But how was he to know what had become of her? Being city-bred, it did not immediately occur to her that King might follow the tracks of her abductor, and so she was borne on more deeply into the sombre forest without even the slightly alleviating reassurance of faint hope. She was lost! Of that Fou-tan was convinced; for was it not well known that the Yeacks fed upon human flesh?

The brute, sensing muddily that he would be pursued, and having witnessed something of the prowess of King, did not pause in his flight but hastened steadily on toward a rocky fastness which he knew, where one might hide for days or, if discovered, find a cave, the mouth of which might be easily defended.

As he strode steadily through the forest his keen ears were presently attracted by a familiar sound, a sound which experience told him was a warning to change his course. A moment later he saw the elephants moving slowly across his path toward his left. He had no wish to dispute the right-of-way with them; so he veered to the right with the intention of passing behind them. They did not see him, but they caught his scent spoor, and an old bull left the herd and came ponderously down toward the point where the brute had first sighted them. The rest of the herd halted and then followed the old bull. The scent spoor of the man grated upon the nerves of the pachyderms. They became restless and irritable, more so because they could not locate the authors of this disturbing scent.

As the brute moved quickly to the right to circle to the rear of the herd and resume his interrupted course toward the wild sanctuary that was his objective, he kept his eyes turned to the left upon the members of the herd, lest, by chance, one of them might discover him and charge. A remote possibility, perhaps, but it is by guarding against remote possibilities that the fittest of primitive creatures survive. So, because of the fact that his attention was riveted in one direction, he did not see the danger approaching from another.

A score of soldiers, their brass cuirasses dulled and tarnished by the rain and dirt of jungle marches, halted at the sight of the brute and the burden he bore. A young officer in charge whispered a few low words of command. The soldiers crept forward, forming a half-circle as they went, to intercept the brute and his captive. One of the soldiers stumbled over a branch that had fallen from the tree above. Instantly the brute wheeled toward them. He saw twenty well-armed men advancing, their spears menacingly ready; and responding to the urge of Nature's first law, the brute cast the girl roughly to the ground and, wheeling, broke for freedom. A shower of arrows followed him and some of the soldiers would have pursued, but the officer called them back.

"We have the girl," he said; "let that thing go. We were not sent out for him. He is not the man who abducted the apsaras from the palace of Lodivarman."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

At the moment that the brute had seen the soldiers, so had Fou-tan; and now she scrambled quickly to her feet, from where he had hurled her to the ground, and turned in flight back toward the gorge where she had last seen King.

"After her!" cried the officer; "but do not harm her."

Fou-tan ran fleetly and perhaps would have gotten away from them had not she tripped and fallen; as she scrambled to her feet, they were upon her. Rough hands seized her, but they did not harm her, nor did they offer her insult; for she who was to have been the favourite of Lodivarman might yet be, and it is not well to incur the displeasure of a king's favourite.

"Where is the man?" asked the officer, addressing Fou-tan.

The girl thought very quickly in that instant, and there was apparently no hesitation as she nodded her head in the direction that the fleeing brute had taken. "You know as well as I do," she said. "Why did you not capture him?"

"Not that man," said the officer. "I refer to the soldier of the guard who abducted you from the palace of Lodivarman."

"It was no soldier of the guard who abducted me," replied the girl. "This creature stole into the palace and seized me. A soldier of the guard followed us into the jungle and tried to rescue me, but he failed."

"Lodivarman sent word that it was the strange warrior, Gordon King, who stole you from the palace," said the officer.

"You saw the creature that stole me," said Fou-tan. "Did it look like a soldier of Lodivarman?"

"No," admitted the officer, "but where is this Gordon King? He has disappeared from Lodidhapura."

"I told you that he tried to rescue me," explained Fou-tan. "He followed us into the jungle. What became of him I do not know. Perhaps the Yeacks wrought a magic spell that killed him."

"Yeacks!" exclaimed the officer. "What do you mean?"

"Did you not recognise my captor as a Yeack?" asked Fou-tan. "Do you not know a Yeack when you see one?"

Exclamations arose from the soldiers gathered about them. "By the gods, it was a Yeack," said one. "Perhaps there are others about," suggested another. The man looked about them fearfully.

Fou-tan thought that she saw in their superstitious terror, which she fully shared herself, a possibility of escape. "The Yeacks will be angry with you for having taken me from one of their number," she said. "Doubtless he has gone to summon his fellows. You had best escape while you can. If you

do not take me with you, they will not follow you."

"By Siva, she is right!" exclaimed a warrior.

"I am not afraid of the Yeacks," said the officer bravely; "but we have the apsaras and there is no reason why we should remain here longer. Come!" He took Fou-tan gently by the arm.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"If you take me they will follow you," she said. "You had better leave me here."

"Yes, leave her here," grumbled some of the warriors.

"We shall take the girl with us," said the officer. "I may escape the wrath of the Yeacks, but if I return to Lodidhapura without the apsaras I shall not escape the wrath of Lodivarman," and he gave the command to form for the march.

As the party moved away down toward the trail that leads to Lodidhapura, many were the nervous glances that the warriors cast behind them. There was much muttering and grumbling, and it was apparent that they did not relish being the escort of a recaptured prisoner of the Yeacks. Fou-tan fed their fears and their dissatisfaction by constant reference to the vengeance that would fall upon them in some form when the Yeacks should overtake them.

"You are very foolish to risk your life needlessly," she told the young officer. "If you leave me here you will be safe from the Yeacks, and no one in Lodidhapura need know that you have found me."

"Why should you wish to remain and become the victim of the Yeacks?" demanded the officer.

"It makes no difference whether you are with me or not," insisted Fou-tan. "The Yeacks will get me again. In some form they will come and take me. If you are with me they will slay you all."

"But there is a chance that we may escape them and get back to Lodidhapura," insisted the officer.

"I would rather remain with the Yeacks than go back to Lodivarman," said the girl. But in her breast was the hope that she could find Gordon King before the Yeacks overtook her; and, notwithstanding her superstitious fear of them, so great was her faith in the prowess of her man that she had no doubt but that he could overcome them.

Her arguments, however, were unavailing. She could not swerve the young officer from his determination to take her back to Lodidhapura. From the first however, it was apparent that the common soldiers were less enthusiastic about her company. The warriors of Pnom Dhek they could face with courage, or the charge of My Lord the Tiger, but contemplation of the supernatural powers of the mythological Yeacks filled their superstitious breasts with naught but terror. There were those among them who even discussed the advisability of murdering the officer, abandoning the girl, and returning to Lodidhapura with some plausible explanation, which their encounter with the Yeack readily suggested; but none of these things were they destined to do.

As King saw the great elephant advancing toward him he became seriously alive to the danger of his situation. He looked hurriedly about him, searching for an avenue of escape, but nowhere near was there a single tree of sufficient size to have withstood the titanic strength of the great bull should he have elected to fell it. To face the bull or to attempt to escape by running seemed equally futile; yet it was the latter alternative which commended itself to him as being the less suicidal.

But just then something happened. The bull stopped in his advance and looked suddenly toward his left. His trumpeting ceased, and then most unexpectedly he wheeled about and bolted directly away from King to be immediately followed by the entire herd,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

which went crashing through the jungle, bowling over trees in their mad progress until finally they disappeared from view.

With a sigh of relief King took up his interrupted pursuit, following in the wake of the elephants, which had disappeared in the direction taken by the abductor of Fou-tan. What had brought about the sudden change in the attitude of the bull King could not guess, nor did he ever discover. He attributed it to the mental vagaries of a naturally timid and nervous animal. He did not know that a changing breeze had brought to the nostrils of the pachyderm the scent spoor of many men—the soldiers of Lodivarman—nor was the matter of any particular importance to King, whose mind was occupied now with something of far greater moment. The stampeding elephants had entirely obliterated the tracks that King had been following, and this it was that gave him the greatest concern. It seemed that everything militated against the success of his pursuit. He zig-zagged to the right and left of the elephant tracks in the hope of picking up the footprints of the fleeing man. When he had about abandoned hope, he saw in the soft earth a single familiar spoor—the imprint of a great flat foot. By what seemed little less than a miracle this single tell-tale clue had escaped the rushing feet of the herd. It pointed on in the direction that King had been going; and, with renewed hope, he hurried forward.

Among fallen trees, bowled over by the terrified elephants, King pursued his quarry until he was brought to a sudden stop by a tragic tableau of the jungle that instantly filled him with dire misgiving. A short distance ahead of him lay a man pinioned to the earth by a small tree that had fallen across his legs. Facing the man, crouching belly to the ground, advancing slowly inch by inch, was a great leopard. The man was helpless. In another instant the cat would be upon him, rending and tearing. Naturally the first thought that entered King's head was that this was the man who had abducted Foutan, and, if so, where was the girl? Until that question was answered the man must not die.

With a cry of warning intended to distract the attention of the leopard, King sprang forward, simultaneously fitting an arrow to his bow. The leopard leaped to its feet. For an instant it stood glaring menacingly at the advancing man; and seeing it hesitate, King did not launch his shaft, for he saw now that he might come within effective spear range of the beast before it charged; and he guessed that an arrow might only serve to infuriate it.

Disconcerted by this unexpected interference with its plans and with the interloper's bold advance, the brute hesitated a moment and then, wheeling, bounded off into the jungle.

The man lying upon the ground had been a witness to all this. He was saved from the leopard, but he looked apprehensively at King as the latter stopped beside him, for he recognised the newcomer as the man from whom he had stolen the girl. If he had any doubts as to the other's awareness of his guilt, it was dissipated by King's first words.

"Where is the girl?" demanded the American.

"The soldiers took her from me," replied the brute sullenly.

"What soldiers?"

"They were soldiers from Lodidhapura," replied the other.

"I believe that you are lying," said King, "and I ought to kill you." He raised his spear.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The brute did not wish to die. He had lost the girl, but he did not wish to lose his life also; and now, with effort, spurred by the desire to live, his brain gave birth to a simple idea. "You have saved my life," he said. "If you will raise this tree from my legs, I will help you to find the girl and take her away from the soldiers. That I will do if you do not kill me."

The man's spear had fallen beside him. As King considered the proposition he recovered the weapon and then took the bow and arrows from the man also.

"Why do you do that?" asked the brute.

"So that if I decide to release you, you may not be tempted to kill me," replied King.

"Very well," replied the brute, "but I shall not try to kill you." King stooped and seized the bole of the tree. It was not a very large tree, but it had fallen in such a way that the man, unassisted, could not have released himself; and as King raised it, the brute drew his legs from beneath it.

"Any bones broken?" asked King.

The brute rose slowly to his feet. "No," he said.

"Then let's be on our way," urged King. "We have no time to lose."

As the two men set out King walked a little in the rear of the other. He had been impressed from the first by the savage bestiality of his companion's face and now by his tremendous size. His huge, drooped shoulders and his long arms seemed capable of the most titanic feats of strength; yet the creature, who seemingly could have slain him as easily without weapons as with, led docilely on, until at last King was convinced that the fellow contemplated no treachery, but would carry out his part of the bargain with simple-minded loyalty.

"Who are you?" demanded King after they had walked in silence for a considerable distance.

"I am Prang," replied the brute.

"What were you doing out here in the jungle?" asked King.

"I live here," replied the brute.

"Where?"

"Anywhere," replied Prang with a broad gesture.

"Where are your people?" asked King.

"I have none; I live alone."

"Have you always lived in the jungle?"

"Not always, but for a long time."

"Where did you come from?"

"From Pnom Dhek."

"Then you are a runaway slave?" asked King.

The brute nodded his head. "But you need not try to return me. If you did that I should kill you."

"I do not intend to try to return you to Pnom Dhek. I am not from Pnom Dhek."

"Yes, I knew that from your armor," said the brute. "You are from Lodidhapura. You

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

stole the girl and they sent soldiers after you. Is that not true?"

"Yes," replied King.

"It may be hard to take the girl away from the soldiers of Lodidhapura," said Prang. "We cannot do it by day, for they are many and we are few; but we can find them and follow them; and at night, perhaps, you can sneak into their camp and steal the girl, if she will come with you willingly."

"She will," said King; and then: "How long have you lived alone in the jungle, Prang?"

"I ran away when I was a boy. Many rains have come since then. I do not know how many, but it has been a long time."

As Prang led on through the jungle they conversed but little; enough, however, to assure King that the great, hulking brute had the mind of a little child, and as long as King did nothing to arouse his suspicions or his fears he would be quite docile and tractable. King noticed that Prang was not leading him back over the same route that they had come, and when he asked the man why they were going in a different direction, Prang explained that he knew the trail that the warriors would take in returning to Lodidhapura and that this was a shortcut to it.

In places the jungle was quite open and covered with tall, dry elephant grass, which, growing higher than their heads, obstructed their view in all directions, while the rustling of its leaves as they pushed their way through it drowned all other sounds. At such times King always felt particularly helpless and was relieved each time they emerged from the stifling embrace of the tall grasses; but Prang seemed not at all concerned, although he was walking almost naked and unarmed.

They had passed through a particularly long stretch of elephant grass when they emerged into a clearing entirely destitute of either grass or trees. Beyond the clearing, in front of them, they could see the forest at no great distance, but there was still a narrow belt of elephant grass which they must pass through before they reached the trees.

When they had advanced almost to the centre of this clearing, simultaneously their attention was attracted to a movement among the grasses ahead and to the left of them, and almost at the same moment a cuirassed soldier stepped into view, to be followed immediately by others. At the first glance King recognised that these men were not soldiers from Lodidhapura, for though their armour and harness were similar, they were not identical, and their helmets were of an entirely different pattern from that which he wore. At sight of them Prang halted, then he turned and started to run back in the direction from which they had come. "Run!" he cried, "They are warriors from Pnom Dhek."

Instantly King realised that these newcomers might prove to be Fou-tan's salvation if he could guide them to her, but without Prang that might be impossible, and therefore he turned and pursued the fleeing brute. Into the tall elephant grasses, close upon his heels, ran King. "Stop!" commanded the white man.

"Never!" screamed Prang. "They will take me back into slavery. Do not try to stop me, or I shall kill you." But the capture of Prang meant more to Gordon King than his life, and so he only redoubled his efforts to gain upon the fleeing man. Gradually he crept up upon him until at last he was within reach.

How futile it seemed to attempt to seize that mountain of muscle and bone, yet if he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

could detain him even momentarily he was positive that the soldiers would overtake them, for at the instant that they had turned to flee he had seen the soldiers from Pnom Dhek start in pursuit.

In King's experience he had learned but one way to stop a fleeing man without maiming or killing him, which he had no desire to do, although he held in his hands lethal weapons with which he might easily have brought down his quarry; and so he threw aside the spear that he carried and launched himself at the great legs of Prang. It was a noble tackle, and it brought Prang to earth with a resounding crash that almost knocked the wind out of him.

"Hurry!" yelled King to the soldiers of Pnom Dhek. "I have him!" He heard the warriors crashing through the dry grasses behind him.

"Let me go," cried the struggling Prang. "Let me go or they will take me back into slavery." But King clung to him in desperation, though it was much like attempting to cling to the business end of a mule, so mighty and vigorous were the kicks of Prang; and then the soldiers of Pnom Dhek arrived and fell upon both of them impartially.

"Don't kill him!" cried King as he saw the menacing spears of the warriors. "Wait until you hear me."

"Who are you?" demanded an officer. "What does this all mean? We saw you in company with this fellow; and now, though you are a soldier of Lodivarman, you turn upon your companion and capture him for us. What does it mean?"

"It is a long story," said King, "and there is no time for explanations now. Somewhere ahead of us there is a girl from Pnom Dhek whom I helped to escape from Lodidhapura. She has just been recaptured by some of Lodivarman's warriors. This man was guiding me to her. Will you help me to rescue this girl?"

"You are trying to lead me into a trap," said the officer suspiciously. "I do not believe that there is any girl."

"Yes, there is a girl," said Prang.

"Her name is Fou-tan," said King.

Interest was immediately evident in the eyes of the officer and excitement in the attitude of his men. "I will go with you," said the officer. "If you have lied to me and this is indeed a trap, you shall die at the first indication of treachery."

"I am content," said King; "but there is one more condition. I cannot lead you to the girl; but this man says that he can, and I know that he will do it willingly and quickly if you will promise him his freedom in return for his assistance."

A sudden gleam of hope shone in Prang's eyes as he heard King's words; and he looked up expectantly at the officer, awaiting his reply.

"Certainly," said the latter. "If he leads us to Foutan, he shall have not only his liberty but any other reward that he may desire. I can promise him that."

"I wish only my freedom," said Prang.

"Lead on, then," said the officer. And then as the march started he detailed two warriors to remain constantly at Prang's side and two with King, and these warriors he instructed to kill their charges at the first indication of treachery.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Evidently interested in King, the officer walked beside him. It was apparent that he had noticed the lack of physical resemblance to the Khmers and his curiosity was aroused. "You do not greatly resemble the men of Lodidhapura," he said finally.

"I am not of Lodidhapura," said King.

"But you are in the armour of Lodivarman's warriors," insisted the officer.

"I am from a far country," explained King. "Lost in the jungle, I was taken prisoner by Lodivarman's warriors. I pleased the King, and he gave me service in the royal guard."

"But how is it, then, that you are befriending a girl from Pnom Dhek?"

"That, as I told you, is a long story," said King, "but when we have found her she will corroborate all that I have said. I was forced into the service of Lodivarman. I owe him no loyalty, and should I fall into his hands again I can expect no mercy. Therefore, it had been my intention, when I reached Pnom Dhek with Fou-tan, to seek service in your army."

"If you have befriended Fou-tan, your petition will not go unheeded," said the officer.

"You have heard of her, then?" asked King.

The officer gave the American a long, searching look before he replied. "Yes," he said.

The captors of Fou-tan were exerting no effort to make haste. For almost two days they had been marching rapidly through the jungle, searching for a clue to the whereabouts of Fou-tan and her escort; and now that they had found her, they were taking it easy, moving slowly toward the spot where they were to camp for the night. Knowing nothing of the presence of the soldiers of Beng Kher of Pnom Dhek, they anticipated no pursuit. Their conversation was often filled with conjecture as to the identity of Fou-Tan's companion. Some of them insisted that the Yeack and King were one and the same.

"I always knew that there was something wrong with the fellow," opined a warrior; "there was a peculiar look about him. He was no Khmer; nor was he of any race of mortal men."

"Perhaps he was a Naga, who took the form first of a man and then changed himself into a Yeack," suggested another.

"I think that he was a Yeack all along," said another, "and that he took the form of man only to deceive us, that he might enter the palace of Lodivarman and steal the girl."

It was while they were discussing this matter that a warrior marching at the rear of the column was attracted by a noise behind him. Turning his head to look, he gave a sudden cry of alarm, for in their rear, creeping upon them, he saw the brute and a body of soldiers.

"The Yeacks are coming!" he cried.

The others turned quickly at his warning cry. "I told you so," screamed one. "The Yeack has brought his fellows."

"Those are soldiers of Pnom Dhek," cried the officer. "Form line and advance upon them. Let it not be said that men of Lodidhapura fled from the warriors of Beng Kher."

"They are Yeacks who have taken the form of soldiers of Pnom Dhek," cried a war-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

rior. "Mortals cannot contend against them," and with that he threw down his spear and fled.

At the same instant the soldiers of Pnom Dhek leaped forward, shouting their war-cry.

The defection of the single Lodidhapurian warrior was all that had been needed to ignite the smouldering embers of discontent and mutiny already fully fed by their superstitious fears. To a man, the common soldiers turned and ran, leaving their officer and Fou-tan alone. For an instant the man stood his ground and then, evidently realising the hopelessness of his position, he, too, wheeled and followed his retreating men at top speed.

What Fou-tan's feelings must have been, it was difficult to imagine. Here, suddenly and entirely without warning, appeared a company of soldiers from her native city, and with them were the horrid Yeack that had stolen her away from King and also Gordon King himself. For a moment she stood in mute and wide-eyed wonderment as the men approached her, and then she turned to the man she loved. "Gordon King," she said, "I knew that you would come."

The soldiers of Pnom Dhek gathered around her, the common warriors keeping at a respectful distance, while the officer approached and, kneeling, kissed her hand.

King was not a little puzzled for an explanation of the evident respect in which they held her, but then he realised that he was not familiar with the customs of the country. He was aware, however, that the apsaras, or dancing girls of the temples, were held in considerable veneration because of the ritualistic nature of their dances, which identified them closely with the religious life of the nation and rendered them, in a way, the particular wards of the gods.

The officer questioned her briefly and respectfully; and, having thus assured himself of King's loyalty and integrity, his attitude toward the American changed from suspicion to cordiality.

To Fou-tan's questions relative to Prang, King explained by telling the story of the brute as he had had it from his own lips; yet it was evidently most difficult for Fou-tan to relinquish her conviction that the creature was a Yeack; nor could any other have assured her of Prang's prosaic status than Gordon King, in whose lightest words she beheld both truth and authority.

"Now that I have led you to the girl," said Prang, addressing the officer, "give me the liberty that you promised me."

"It is yours," said the officer; "but if you wish to return and live in Pnom Dhek I can promise you that the King will make you a free man."

"Yes," said Fou-tan, "and you shall have food and clothing as long as you live."

The brute shook his head. "No," he said. "I am afraid of the city. Let me stay in the jungle, where I am safe. Give me back my weapons and let me go."

They did as he requested, and a moment later Prang slouched off into the forest soon to be lost to their view, choosing the freedom of the jungle to the luxuries of the city.

Once again the march was resumed, this time in the direction of Pnom Dhek. As Fou-tan and King walked side by side the girl said to him in a low voice, "Do not let them

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

know yet of our love. First, I must win my father, and after that the whole world may know."

All during the long march King was again and again impressed by the marked deference accorded Fou-tan. It was so noticeable that the natural little familiarities of their own comradeship took on the formidable aspects of sacrilege by comparison. To King's western mind it seemed strange that so much respect should be paid to a temple dancing girl; but he was glad that it was so, for in his heart he knew that whatever reverence they showed Fou-tan she deserved, because of the graces of her character and the purity of her soul.

The long march to Pnom Dhek was uneventful, and near the close of the second day the walls of the city rose before them across a clearing as they emerged from the forest. In outward appearance Pnom Dhek was similar to Lodidhapura. Its majestic piles of masonry arose in stately grandeur above the jungle. Its ornate towers and splendid temples bore witness to the wealth and culture of its builders, and over all was the same indefinable suggestion of antiquity. Pnom Dhek was a living city, yet so softened and mellowed by the passing centuries that even in life it suggested more the reincarnation of ancient glories than an actuality of the present.

"Pnom Dhek!" whispered Fou-tan, and in her tone there were love and reverence.

"You are glad to get back?" asked King.

"That can scarcely express what I feel," replied the girl. "I doubt if you can realise what Pnom Dhek means to one of her sons or daughters; and so, too, you cannot guess the gratitude that I feel to you, Gordon King, who, alone are responsible for my return."

He looked at her for a moment in silence. As she stood devouring Pnom Dhek with her eyes there was a rapturous exaltation in her gaze that suggested the fervour of religious passion, and the thought gave him pause.

"Perhaps, Fou-tan," he suggested, "you have mistaken gratitude for love."

She looked up at him quickly. "You do not understand, Gordon King," she said. "For two thousand years love for Pnom Dhek has been bred into the blood that animates me. It is a part of me that can die only when I die; yet I could never see Pnom Dhek again and yet be happy; though should I never see you again, I might never be happy again even in Pnom Dhek. Now do you understand?"

"That I was jealous of stone and wood shows how much I love you, Fou-tan," he said.

A soldier, lightened of his cuirass and weapons, had run swiftly ahead to the city gates, which they were approaching, to announce their coming; and presently there was a blare of trumpets at the gate, and this was answered by the sound of other trumpets within the city and the deep booming of gongs and the ringing of bells until the whole city was alive with noise. Then once again was King mystified; but there was more to come.

As they moved slowly now along the avenue toward the city gates, a company of soldiers emerged and behind them a file of elephants, gaudily trapped, and surging forward upon either side of these were people—men, women and children—shouting and singing, until from hundreds their numbers grew to thousands. So quickly had they gathered that it seemed as much a miracle to King as did the occasion for their rejoicing,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and now he became convinced that Fou-tan must be a priestess at least, if all this rejoicing and pandemonium were in honour of her return.

The populace, outstripping the soldiers, were the first to reach them. Quickly the warriors that composed their escort formed a ring about Fou-tan and King, but the people held their distance respectfully, and now out of the babel of voices King caught some of the words of their greeting—words that filled him with surprise.

"Fou-tan! Fou-tan!" they cried. "Welcome to our beloved Princess that was lost and is found again!"

King turned to the girl. "Princess!" he exclaimed. "You did not tell me, Fou-tan."

"Many men have courted me because I am a princess," she said. "You loved me for myself alone, and I wanted to cling to that as long as I might."

"And Beng Kher is your father?" he asked.

"Yes, I am the daughter of the King," replied Fou-tan.

"I am glad that I did not know," said King simply.

"And so am I," replied the girl, "for now no one can ever make me doubt your love."

"I wish that you were not a princess," he said in a troubled voice.

"Why?" she demanded.

"None would have objected had the slave girl wished to marry me," he said, "but I can well imagine that many will object to a nameless warrior taking the Princess of Pnom Dhek."

"Perhaps," she said sadly, "but let us not think of that now."

In the howdah of the leading elephant sat a large, stern-faced man, beneath a parasol of cloth of gold and red. When the elephant upon which he rode was stopped near them, ladder-like steps were brought from the back of an elephant in the rear and the man descended to the ground, while the people prostrated themselves and touched their foreheads to the earth. As the man approached, Fou-tan advanced to meet him, and when she was directly in front of him, she kneeled and took his hand. There was moisture in the man's stern eyes as he lifted the girl to her feet and took her into his arms. It was Beng Kher the King, father of Fou-tan.

After the first greeting Fou-tan whispered a few words to Beng Kher, and immediately Beng Kher directed Gordon King to advance. Following Foutan's example, the American knelt and kissed the King's hand. "Arise!" said Beng Kher. "My daughter, the Princess, tells me that it is to you she owes her escape from Lodidhapura. You shall be suitably rewarded.

You shall know the gratitude of Beng Kher." He signalled to one of his retinue that had descended from the elephant in his rear. "See that this brave warrior lacks for nothing," he said. "Later we shall summon him to our presence again."

Once more did Fou-tan whisper a few low words to her father, the King.

The King knit his brows as though he were not entirely pleased with whatever suggestion Fou-tan had made, but presently the lines of his face softened and again he turned to the official to whom he had just spoken. "You will conduct the warrior to the palace and accord him all honour, for he is to be the guest of Beng Kher." Then, with Fou-tan, he

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ascended into the howdah of the royal elephant, while the officer, whom he had designated to escort Gordon King, approached the American.

King's first impression of the man was not a pleasant one.

The fellow's face was coarse and sensual and his manner haughty and supercilious. He made no attempt to conceal his disgust as his eyes appraised the soiled and tarnished raiment of the common warrior before him. "Follow me, my man," he said. "The King has condescended to command that you be quartered in the palace," and without further words of greeting he turned and strode toward the elephant upon which he had ridden from the city.

In the howdah with them were two other gorgeously dressed officials and a slave who held a great parasol over them all. With no consideration for his feelings and quite as though he had not been present, King's companions discussed the impropriety of inviting a common soldier to the palace. Suddenly his escort turned toward him. "What is your name, my man?" he demanded, arrogantly.

"My name is Gordon King," replied the American; "but I am not your man." His voice was low and even and his level gaze was directed straight into the eyes of the officer.

The man's eyes shifted and then he flushed and scowled. "Perhaps you do not know," he said, "that I am the prince, Bharata Rahon." His tone was supercilious, his voice unpleasant.

"Yes?" inquired King politely. So this was Bharata Rahon—this was the man whom Beng Kher had selected as the husband of Fou-tan. "No wonder she ran away and hid in the jungle," murmured King.

"What is that?" demanded Bharata Rahon. "What did you say?"

"I am sure," said King, "that the noble prince would not be interested in anything a common warrior might say."

Bharata Rahon grunted and the conversation ended; nor did either address the other again as the procession wound its way through the avenues of Pnom Dhek toward the palace of the King. The way was lined with cheering people, and strongly apparent to King was the sincerity of their welcome to Fou-tan and the reality of their happiness that she had been returned to them.

The palace of Beng Kher was a low rambling building covering a considerable area. Its central portion had evidently been conceived as a harmonious unit, to which various kings had added without much attention to harmony; yet the whole was rather impressive and was much larger than the palace of Lodivarman. The grounds surrounding it were beautifully planted and maintained with meticulous care. The gate through which they passed into the royal enclosure was of great size and had evidently been designed to permit the easy passage of a column of elephants, two abreast.

The avenue from the gate led straight between old trees to the main entrance to the palace, and here the party descended from their howdahs and followed in the train of Beng Kher and Fou-tan as they entered the palace amidst such pomp and ceremony as King never before had witnessed. It occurred to him that if such things must follow the comings and goings of kings, the glory of sovereignty had decided drawbacks. There were at least two hundred soldiers, functionaries, courtiers, priests, and slaves occu-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

pied with the ceremony of receiving the King and the Princess into the palace, and with such mechanical accuracy did they take their posts and perform their parts that it was readily apparent to the American that they were observing a formal custom to which they had become accustomed by long and continued usage.

Down a long corridor, those in the royal party followed Beng Kher and Fou-tan to a large audience chamber, where the King dismissed them. Then he passed on through a doorway with Fou-tan; and when the door closed behind them, most of the party immediately dispersed.

Bharata Rahon beckoned King to follow him and, conducting him to another part of the palace, led him into a room which was one of a suite of three.

"Here are your quarters," said Bharata Rahon. "I shall send slaves with apparel more suitable for the guest of Beng Kher. Food will be served to you here. Do not leave the apartment until you receive instructions from the King or from me."

"I thought that I was a guest," said King, "but it appears that I am a prisoner."

"That is as the King wills," replied the prince. "You should be more grateful, fellow, for the favours that you already have received."

"Phew!" exclaimed King as Bharata Rahon left the room. "It is certainly a relief to get rid of you. The more I see of you the easier it is to understand how Fou-tan preferred My Lord the Tiger to Prince Bharata Rahon."

As King examined the rooms assigned to him, he saw that they overlooked the royal garden at a particularly beautiful spot; nor could he wonder now why Fou-tan loved her home.

His reveries were interrupted by the coming of two slaves; one carried warm water for a bath, and the other raiment suitable for a king's guest. They told him that they had been assigned to serve him while he remained in the palace and that one of them would always be in attendance, remaining in the corridor outside his door. The water, which was contained in two earthen vessels and supported at the ends of a pole that one of the slaves carried across his shoulders, was taken to the innermost of the three rooms and deposited beside a huge earthen bowl that was so large that a man might sit down inside it. Towels and brushes were brought and other necessary requisites of the toilet.

King stripped and entered the bowl, and then one of the slaves poured water over him while the other scrubbed him vigorously with two brushes. It was, indeed, a heroic bath, but it left King stimulated and exhilarated and much refreshed after his tiresome journey.

The scrubbing completed to their satisfaction, they bade him step out of the bowl on to a soft rug, where they oiled his body from head to foot and then proceeded to rub his skin vigorously until all of the oil had disappeared. Following this, they anointed him with some sweet-smelling lotion; and while the water-carrier emptied the bowl and carried the bath water away, the other slave assisted King as he donned his new clothing.

"I am Hamar," whispered the fellow after the other slave had left the apartment. "I belong to Foutan, who trusts me. She sent this to you as a sign that you may trust me also."

He handed King a tiny ring, a beautiful example of the goldsmith's art. It was strung

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

upon a golden chain. "Wear it about your neck," said Hamar. "It will take you in safety many places in Pnom Dhek. Only the King's authority is greater than this."

"Did she send no message?" asked King.

"She said to tell you that all was not as favourable as she had hoped, but to be of good heart."

"Convey my thanks to her if you can," said King, "and tell her that her message and her gift have cheered me."

The other slave returned now, and as King had no further need of them, he dismissed them both.

The two had scarcely departed when a young man entered, resplendent in the rich trappings of an officer.

"I am Indra Sen," announced the new-comer. "Bharata Rahon has sent me to see that you do not lack for entertainment in the palace of Beng Kher."

"Bharata Rahon did not seem to relish the idea of entertaining a common warrior," said King with a smile.

"No," replied the young man. "Bharata Rahon is like that. Sometimes he puts on such airs that one might think him the King himself. Indeed, he has hopes some day of becoming king, for it is said that Beng Kher would marry Fou-tan to him, and as Beng Kher has no son, Fou-tan and Bharata Rahon would rule after Beng Kher died, which may the gods forbid."

"Forbid that Beng Kher die?" asked King; "or that Fou-tan and Bharata Rahon rule?"

"There is none but would serve Fou-tan loyally and gladly," replied Indra Sen; "but there is none who likes Bharata Rahon, and it is feared that as Foutan's husband he might influence her to do things which she would not otherwise do."

"It is strange," said King, "that Beng Kher has no son in a land where a king takes many wives."

"He has many sons," replied Indra Sen, "but the son of a concubine may not become king. Beng Kher would take but one queen, and when she died he would have no other."

"If Fou-tan had not been found and Beng Kher had died, would Bharata Rahon have become king?" asked the American.

"In that event the princes would have chosen a new king, but it would not have been Bharata Rahon," replied the officer.

"Then his only hope of becoming king is by marrying Fou-tan?"

"That is his only hope."

"And Beng Kher favours his suit?" continued King.

"The man seems to exercise some strange influence over Beng Kher," explained Indra Sen. "The King's heart is set upon wedding Fou-tan to him, and because the King is growing old he would have this matter settled quickly. It is well known that Foutan objects. She does not want to marry Bharata Rahon, but though the King indulges her in every other whim, he is adamant in this matter. Once Foutan ran away into the jungle to escape the marriage; and no one knows yet what the outcome will be, for our little princess, Fou-tan, has a will and a mind of her own; but the King—well, he is the King."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

For three days Indra Sen performed the duties of a host. He conducted King about the palace grounds; he took him to the temples and out into the city, to the market place, and the bazaars. Together they watched the apsarases dance in the temple court; but during all this time King saw nothing of Fou-tan, nor did Beng Kher send for him. Twice he had received brief messages from Foutan through Hamar, but they were only such messages as might be transmitted by word of mouth through a slave and were far from satisfying the man's longing for his sweetheart.

Upon the fourth day Indra Sen did not come, as was his custom, early in the morning; nor did Hamar appear, but only the other slave—an ignorant, taciturn man whom King never had been able to engage in conversation.

King had never left his apartment except in the company of Indra Sen, and while Bharata Rahon had warned him against any such independent excursion the American had not taken the suggestion seriously, believing it to have been animated solely by the choler of the Khmer prince. Heretofore, Indra Sen had arrived before there might be any occasion for King to wish to venture forth alone; but there had never been anything in the attitude of the young officer to indicate that the American was other than an honoured guest, nor had there been any reason to believe that he might not come and go as he chose. Having waited, therefore, for a considerable time upon Indra Sen on this particular morning, King decided to walk out into the royal garden after leaving word with the slave, who always attended just outside his door, that the young officer, when he came, might find him there; but when he opened the door into the corridor there was no slave, but, instead, two burly warriors, who instantly turned and barred the exit with their spears.

"You may not leave your quarters," said one of them gruffly and with a finality that seemed to preclude argument.

"And why not?" demanded the American. "I am the King's guest and I only wish to walk in the garden."

"We have received our orders," replied the warrior. "You are not permitted to leave your quarters."

"Then it would appear that I am not the King's guest, but the King's prisoner."

The warrior shrugged. "We have our orders," he said; "other than this we know nothing."

The American turned back into the room and closed the door. What did it all mean? He crossed the apartment to one of the windows and stood looking out upon the garden. He rehearsed his every act and speech since he had entered Pnom Dhek, searching for some clue that might explain the change of attitude toward him; but he found nothing that might warrant it; and so he concluded that it was the result of something that had occurred of which he had no knowledge; but the natural inference was that it was closely allied to his love for Fou-tan and Beng Kher's determination that she should wed Bharata Rahon.

The day wore on. The taciturn slave came with food, but Hamar did not appear; nor did Indra Sen. King paced his quarters like a caged tiger. Always the windows overlooking the garden attracted him, so that often he paused before them, drawn by the freedom which the garden suggested in contrast to the narrow confines of his quarters. For

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the thousandth time he examined the quarters that had now become his prison. The paintings and hangings that covered the leaden walls had always aroused his interest and curiosity; but today, by reason of constant association, he found them palling upon him. The familiar scenes depicting the activities of kings and priests and dancing girls, the stiffly delineated warriors whose spears never cast and whose bolts were never shot oppressed him now. Their actions for ever inhibited and imprisoned in the artist's paint suggested his own helpless state of imprisonment.

The sun was sinking in the west; the long shadows of the parting day were creeping across the royal garden of Beng Kher; the taciturn slave had come with food and had lighted lamps in each of the three rooms of his apartment—crude wick floating in oil they were, but they served to dispel the darkness of descending night. King, vibrant with the vitality of youth and health, had eaten heartily. The slave removed the dishes and returned.

“Have you further commands for the night, master?” he asked.

King shook his head. “No,” he said, “you need not return until the morning.”

The slave withdrew, and King fell to playing with an idea that had been slowly forming in his mind. The sudden change in his status here that had been suggested by the absence of Hamar and Indra Sen and by the presence of the warriors in the corridor had aroused within him a natural apprehension of impending danger, and consequently directed his mind toward thoughts of escape.

The windows not far above the garden, the darkness of the night, his knowledge of the city and the jungle—all impressed upon him the belief that he might win to freedom with no considerable risk; yet he was still loath to make the attempt because as yet he had nothing definite upon which to base his suspicion that the anger of Beng Kher had been turned upon him, and further, and more important still, because he could not leave Pnom Dhek without first having word with Fou-tan.

As he inwardly debated these matters he paced to and fro the length of the three rooms of his apartment. He had paused in the innermost of the three where the flickering light of the cresset projected his shadow grotesquely upon an ornate hanging that depended from the ceiling to the floor. He had paused there in deep thought, his eyes, seeing and yet unseeing, fastened upon this splendid fabric, when suddenly he saw it move and bulge. There was something or someone behind it.

For the first time since Gordon King had entered the palace of Beng Kher as a guest he was confronted with the realisation that the ornate apparel and trappings that had been furnished him had included no weapons of defence; and now as he saw the hanging bulging mysteriously before his eyes he stepped quickly toward it, prepared to meet either friend or foe with his bare hands. He saw the bulging fold move slowly behind the fabric toward its outer edge, and he followed, ready for any eventuality. With a quick movement the margin of the fabric was pulled aside as Hamar, the slave, stepped into the room, and at the same instant King seized him by the throat.

Recognition was instantaneous and, with a smile, the American released the slave and stepped back. “I did not know whom to expect, Hamar,” he said.

“You were well to be prepared for an enemy, master,” said the slave in low tones,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"for you have powerful ones in Pnom Dhek."

"What brings you here, Hamar, in secrecy and in such mystery?" demanded King.

"Are you alone?" asked Hamar in a whisper.

"Yes."

"Then my mission is fulfilled," said Hamar. "I do but ensure the safety and the secrecy of another who follows me."

Again the hanging bulged as someone passed behind it; and an instant later Fou-tan stood before Gordon King, while the slave, Hamar, bowing low, withdrew.

"Fou-tan!" exclaimed Gordon King, taking a step toward the girl.

"My Gordon King!" whispered Fou-tan as his arms closed about her.

"What has happened that you come to me in this way?" asked King. "I knew that there was something wrong because neither Hamar nor Indra Sen came to-day and there were warriors posted at my door to keep me prisoner. But why talk of such things when I have you? Nothing else counts now, my Fou-tan."

"Ah, Gordon King, but there is much else that counts," replied the girl. "I should have come before, but guards were placed to keep me from you. The King, my father, is mad with rage. To-morrow you are to be destroyed."

"But why?" demanded King.

"Because yesterday I went to my father and confessed our love. I appealed to his gratitude to you for having saved me from Lodivarman and to his love for me, believing that these might outweigh his determination to wed me to Bharata Rahon, but I was mistaken. He flew into an uncontrollable rage of passion. He ordered me to my apartment and he commanded that you be destroyed upon the morrow; but I found a way, thanks to Hamar and Indra Sen, and so I have come to bid you farewell, Gordon King, and to tell you that wherever you may go my heart goes with you, though my body may be the unwilling slave of another. Indra Sen and Hamar will guide you to the jungle and point the way toward the great river that lies in the direction of the rising sun, upon whose opposite shore you will be safe from the machination of Beng Kher and Bharata Rahon."

"And you, Fou-tan—you will go with me?"

The girl shook her head. "No, Gordon King, I may not," she replied sadly.

"And why?" he asked. "You love me and I love you. Come away with me into a land of freedom and happiness, where no one will question our right to love and to live as the gods intended that we should; for you, Fou-tan, and I were made for one another."

"It cannot be, Gordon King," replied the girl. "The thing that you suggest offers to me the only happiness that can be possible to me in life, but for such as I there is an obligation that transcends all thoughts of personal happiness. I was born a princess, and because of that there have devolved upon me certain obligations which may not be escaped. Had I brothers or sisters born of a queen it might be different, but through me alone may the royal dynasty of Pnom Dhek be perpetuated. No, Gordon King, not even love may intervene between a princess of Pnom Dhek and her duty to her people. Always shall my love be yours, and it will be harder for me than for you. If I, who am weak, am brave because of duty, how can you, a man, be less brave? Kiss me once more, then,

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

and for the last time, Gordon King; then go with Hamar and Indra Sen, who will lead you to the jungle and point the way to safety."

As she ceased speaking she threw her arms about his neck and drew his lips to hers. He felt her tears upon his cheeks, and his own eyes grew dim. Perhaps not until this instant of parting had King realised the hold that this dainty flower of the savage jungle had taken upon his heart. As fragile and beautiful as the finest of Meissen ceramics, this little, painted princess of a long dead past held him in a bondage beyond the power of steel.

"I cannot give you up, Fou-tan," he said. "Let me remain. Perhaps if I talked with your father—"

"It would be useless," she said, "even if he would grant you an audience, which he will not."

"Then if you love me as I love you," said King, "you will come away with me."

"Do not say that, Gordon King. It is cruel," replied the girl. "I am taught to place duty above all other considerations, even love. Princesses are not born to happiness. Their exalted birth dedicates them to duty. They are more than human, and so human happiness often is denied them. And now you must go. Indra Sen and Hamar are waiting to guide you to safety. Each moment of delay lessens your chances for escape."

"I do not wish to escape," said King. "I shall remain and face whatever consequences are in store for me, for without you, Fou-tan, life means nothing to me. I would rather remain and die than go away without you."

"No, no," she cried. "Think of me. I must live on, and always, if I believe you to be alive, I shall be happier than I could be if I knew that you were dead."

"You mean that if I were alive there still would be hope?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Not in the way you mean," she replied; "but there would be happiness for me in knowing that perhaps somewhere you were happy. For my sake, you must go. If you love me you will not deny me this shred of happiness."

"If I go," he said, "you will know that wherever I am, I am unhappy."

"I am a woman as well as a princess," she replied, "and so perhaps it will give me a sad happiness to know that you are unhappy because I am denied you." She smiled ruefully.

"Then I shall go, Fou-tan, if only to make you happy in my unhappiness; but I think that I shall not go far and that always I shall nurse hope in my breast, even though you may have put it from you. Think of me, then, as being always near you, Foutan, awaiting the day when I may claim you."

"That will never be, Gordon King," she replied sadly; "yet it will do no harm if in our hearts we nurse a hopeless hope. Kiss me again. It is Fou-tan's last kiss of love."

An eternity of love and passion were encompassed in that brief instant of their farewell embrace, and then Fou-tan tore herself from his arms and was gone.

She was gone! King stood for a long time gazing at the hanging that had moved for a moment to the passage of her lithe figure. It did not seem possible that she had gone out of his life for ever. "Foutan!" he whispered. "Come back to me. You will come back!" But

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the dull pain in his breast was his own best answer to the anguished cry of his stricken soul.

Again the hanging moved and bulged, and his heart leaped to his throat; but it was only Hamar, the slave.

"Come, master!" cried the man. "There is no time to be lost."

King nodded. With leaden steps he followed Hamar to an opening in the wall behind the hanging, and there he found Indra Sen in the mouth of a corridor, a flickering torch in his hand.

"In the service of the Princess," said the officer.

"May the gods protect her and give her every happiness," replied King.

"Come!" said Indra Sen, and turning he led the way along the corridor and down a long flight of stone steps that King knew must lead far beneath the palace. They passed the mouths of branching corridors, attesting the labyrinthine maze that honeycombed the earth beneath the palace of Beng Kher, and then the tunnel led straight and level out beneath the city of Pnom Dhek to the jungle beyond.

"That way lies the great river, Gordon King," said Indra Sen, pointing toward the east. "I should like to go with you farther, but I dare not; if Hamar and I are suspected of aiding in your escape, the blame may be placed upon the Princess, since Hamar is her slave and I an officer of her guard."

"I would not ask you to go farther, Indra Sen," replied King, "nor can I find words in which to thank either you or Hamar."

"Here, master," said Hamar, "is the clothing that you wore when you came to Pnom Dhek. It will be more suitable in the jungle than that you are wearing," and he handed King a bundle that he had been carrying. "Here, also, are weapons—a spear, a knife, a bow and arrows. They are gifts from the Princess, who says that no other knows so well how to use them."

The two waited until King had changed into his worn trappings, and then, bidding him good-bye, they entered the mouth of the tunnel, leaving him alone in the jungle. To the east lay the Mekong, where he might construct a raft and drift down to civilisation. To the south lay Lodidhapura, and beyond that the dwelling of Che and Kangrey. King knew that if he went to the east and the Mekong he would never return. He thought of Susan Anne Prentice and his other friends of the outer world; he thought of the life of usefulness that lay ahead of him there. Then there came to him the vision of a dainty girl upon a great elephant, reminding him of that moment, now so long ago, that he had first seen Fou-tan; and he knew that he must choose now, once and for all, between civilisation and the jungle—between civilisation and the definite knowledge that he would never see her again or the jungle and hope, however remote.

"Susan Anne would think me a fool, and I am quite sure that she would be right," he murmured, as with a shrug he turned his face squarely toward the south and set off upon his long and lonely journey through the jungle.

In his mind there was no definite plan beyond a hazy determination to return to Che and Kangrey and to remain there with them until it would be safe to assume that Beng Kher had ceased to search for him. After that, perhaps, he might return to the vicinity of

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Pnom Dhek. And who could say what might happen then? Thus strongly is implanted in the breast of man the eternal seed of hope. Of course, he knew that he was a fool, but it did not displease him to be a fool if his foolishness kept him in the same jungle with Foutan.

The familiar odours and noises of the jungle assailed his nostrils and his ears. With spear in readiness he groped his way to the trail which he knew led toward the south and his destination. When he found it, some caprice of hope prompted him to blaze a tree at the spot in such a way that he might easily identify it, should he chance to come upon it again.

All night he travelled. Once, for a long time, he knew that some beast was stalking him; but if it had evil intentions toward him it evidently could not muster the courage to put them into action, for eventually he heard it no more. Shortly thereafter dawn came and with it a sense of greater security.

Shortly after sunrise he came upon a herd of wild pigs, and before they were aware of his presence he had sunk an arrow into the heart of a young porker. Then an old boar discovered him and charged, its gleaming tusks flecked with foam, its savage eyes red-rimmed with rage; but King did not wait to discuss matters with the great beast. Plentiful and inviting about him grew the great trees of the jungle, and into one of these he swung himself as the boar tore by.

The rest of the herd had disappeared; but for a long time the boar remained in the vicinity, trotting angrily back and forth along the trail beneath King and occasionally stopping to glare up at him malevolently. It seemed an eternity to the hungry man, but at length the boar appeared to realise the futility of waiting longer for his prey to descend and trotted off into the jungle after his herd, the sound of his passage through the underbrush gradually diminishing until it was lost in the distance. Then King descended and retrieved his kill. Knowing the cunning of savage tusked of the jungle, King was aware that the boar might return to the spot; and so he did not butcher his kill there, but, throwing it across his shoulder, continued on for about a mile. Then, finding a suitable location he stopped and built a fire, over which he soon was grilling a generous portion of his quarry.

After eating, he left the trail and, going into the jungle a short distance, found a place where he could lie down to sleep; and as he dozed he dreamed of snowy linen and soft pillows and heard the voices of many people arguing and scolding. They annoyed him, so that he determined to sell his home and move to another neighbourhood; and then seemingly in the same instant he awoke, though in reality he had slept for six hours. Uppermost in his mind was his complaint against his neighbours, and loud in his ears were their voices as he opened his eyes and looked around in puzzled astonishment at the jungle about him. Then he smiled as the dream picture of his home faded into the reality of his surroundings. The smile broadened into a grin as he caught sight of the monkeys chattering and scolding in the tree above him.

Another night he pushed on through the jungle, and as morning came he guessed that he must be approaching the vicinity of Lodidhapura. He made no kill that morning and built no fire, but satisfied himself with fruits and nuts, which he found in abundance. He had no intention of risking discovery and capture by attempting to pass Lodidhapura

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

by day, and so he found a place where he could lie up until night.

This time he dreamed of Fou-tan and it was a pleasant dream, for they were alone together in the jungle and all obstacles had been removed from their path, but presently they heard people approaching; they seemed to be all about them, and their presence and their talk annoyed Fou-tan and angered King; in fact, he became so angry that he awoke. As the figure of Fou-tan faded from his side, he kept his eyes tight shut, trying to conjure her back again; but the voices of the intruders continued, and that seemed strange to King. He could even hear their words: "I tell you it is he," said one voice; and another cried, "Hey, you, wake up!" Then King opened his eyes to look upon twenty brass cuirasses upon twenty sturdy warriors in the uniform of Lodivarman.

"So you have come back!" exclaimed one of the warriors. "I did not think you were such a fool."

"Neither did I," said King.

"Where is the girl?" demanded the speaker. "Lodivarman will be glad to have you, but he would rather have the girl."

"He will never get her," said King. "She is safe in the palace of her father at Pnom Dhek."

"Then it will go so much the harder for you," said the warrior, "and I am sorry for you, for you are certainly a courageous man."

King shrugged. He looked about him for some avenue of escape, but he was entirely surrounded now and the odds were twenty to one against him. Slowly he arose to his feet. "Here I am," he said. "What are you going to do with me?"

"We are going to take you to Lodivarman," replied the warrior who had spoken first. Then they took his weapons from him and tied his wrists behind his back. They were not cruel nor unduly rough, for in the hearts of these men, themselves brave, was admiration for the courage of their prisoner.

"I'd like to know how you did it," said a warrior walking next to King.

"Did what?" demanded the American.

"How you got into the King's apartment unseen and got out again with the girl. Three men have died for it already, but Lodivarman is no nearer a solution of the puzzle than he was at first."

"Who died and why?" demanded King.

"The major-domo, for one," said the warrior.

"The major-domo did naught but obey the orders of Lodivarman," said King.

"You seem to know a lot about it," replied the warrior; "yet that is the very reason that he died. For once in his life he should have disobeyed the King, but he failed to do so, and Lodivarman lay bound and gagged until Vay Thon came to his rescue."

"Who else died?" asked King.

"The sentry who was posted at the banquet door with you. He had to admit that he had deserted his post, leaving you there alone; and with him was slain the officer of the guard who posted you, a stranger inside the King's palace."

"And these were all?" asked King.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Yes," said the warrior. And when King smiled he asked him why he smiled.

"Oh, nothing of any importance," replied the American. "I was just thinking." He was thinking that the guiltiest of all had escaped—the sentry who had permitted Fou-tan to beguile him into allowing them to pass out of the palace into the garden. He guessed that this man would not be glad to see him return.

"So even now Lodivarman does not know how I escaped from the palace?" he demanded.

"No, but he will," replied the man with a sinister grin.

"What do you mean?" asked the American.

"I mean that before he kills you he will torture the truth from you."

"Evidently my stay in Lodidhapura is to be a pleasant one," he said.

"I do not know how pleasant it will be," replied the warrior; "but it will be short."

"Perhaps I shall be glad of that," said King.

"It will be short, man, but it will seem an eternity. I have seen men die before to satisfy Lodivarman's wrath."

From his captors King learned that his discovery had been purely accidental; the party that had stumbled upon him constituted a patrol, making its daily rounds through the jungle in the vicinity of Lodidhapura. And soon the great city itself arose before King's eyes, magnificent in its ancient glory, but hard as the stone that formed its temples and its towers, and hard as the savage hearts that beat behind its walls. Into its building had gone the sweat and the blood and the lives of a million slaves; behind its frowning walls had been enacted two thousand years of cruelties and bloody crimes committed in the names of kings and gods.

"The mills of the gods!" soliloquised King. "It is not so remarkable that they grind exceedingly fine as it is that their masters can reach out of the ages across a world and lay hold upon a victim who scarce ever heard of them."

They were rapidly approaching one of the gates of Lodidhapura, at the portals of which King knew he must definitely abandon hope; and all that King found to excite his interest was his own apathy to his impending fate. He knew that his mind should be dwelling upon thoughts of escape, and yet he found himself assuming a fatalistic attitude of mind that could contemplate impending death with utmost composure, for, indeed, what had life to offer him? The orbit of his existence was determined by that shining sun about which his love revolved—his little flaming princess. Denied for ever the warmth and light of her near presence, he was a lost satellite, wandering aimlessly in the outer darkness and the cold of interstellar space. What had such an existence to offer against the peaceful oblivion of death?

Yet whatever his thoughts may have been there was no reflection of them in his demeanour, as with firm stride and high-held head he entered once again the city of Lodidhapura, where immediately he and his escort were surrounded by curious crowds as word travelled quickly from mouth to mouth that the abductor of the dancing girl of the Leper King had been captured.

They took him to the dungeons beneath the palace of Lodivarman, and there they

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

chained him to a wall. As if he had been a wild beast they chained him with double chains, and the food that they brought was thrown upon the floor before him— food that one would have hesitated to cast before a beast. The darkness of his cell was mitigated by a window near the low-ceiling—an aperture so small that it might scarcely be dignified by the name of window, since nothing larger than a good-sized cat could have passed through it; yet it served its purpose in a meagre way by admitting light and air.

Once again, as it had many times in the past, a conviction sought foothold in King's mind that he was still the victim of the hallucinations of fever, for notwithstanding all his experiences since he had entered the jungle it did not seem possible that in this twentieth century he, a free-born American, could be the prisoner of a Khmer king. The idea was fantastic, preposterous, unthinkable. He resorted to all the time-worn expedients for proving the fallacy of mental aberration, but in the end he always found himself double-chained to a stone wall in a dark-foul-stinking dungeon.

Night came and with it those most hideous of nocturnal dungeon dwellers—the rats. He fought them off, but always they returned; and all night he battled with them until, when daylight came and they left him, he sank exhausted to the stone flagging of his cell.

Perhaps he slept then, but he could scarcely know, for it seemed that almost instantly a hand was laid upon his shoulder and he was shaken to wakefulness. It was the hand of Vama, the commander of the ten who first had captured him in the jungle; and so it was neither a rough nor unfriendly hand, for the brass-bound warrior could find in his heart only admiration for this courageous stranger who had dared to thwart the desires of the Leper King, whom he feared more than he respected.

"I am glad to see you again, Gordon King," said Vama, "but I am sorry that we meet under such circumstances. The rage of Lodivarman is boundless and from it no man may save you, but it may lessen the anguish of your last hours to know that you have many friends among the warriors of Lodidhapura."

"Thank you, Vama," replied King. "I have found more than friendship in the land of the Khmers, and if I also find death here, it is because of my own choosing. I am content with whatever fate awaits me, but I want you to know that your assurances of friendship will ameliorate whatever pangs of suffering death may hold for me. But why are you here? Has Lodivarman sent you to execute his sentence upon me?"

"He will not finish you so easily as that," replied Vama. "What he has in his mind I do not know. I have been sent to conduct you to his presence, a signal honour for you, attesting the impression that your act made upon him."

"Perhaps he wants to question me," suggested King.

"Doubtless," replied Vama, "but that he could have delegated to his torturers, who well know how to elicit whatever they wish from the lips of their victims."

Vama bent and unlocked the padlock that fettered King to the wall and led him into the corridor upon which his cell opened, where the rest of Vama's ten awaited to escort the prisoner into the presence of Lodivarman. Kau and Tchek were there with the others with whom King had become familiar while he served as a warrior of the royal guard of Lodivarman, Leper King of Lodidhapura. Rough were the greetings that they exchanged, but none the less cordial; and so, guarded by his own friends, Gordon King was con-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ducted toward the audience chamber of Lodivarman.

Lodivarman, a malignant scowl upon his face, crouched upon his great throne. Surrounding him were his warlords and his ministers, his high priests and the officers of his household; and at his left knelt a slave bearing a great golden platter piled high with mushrooms. But for the moment Lodivarman was too intent upon his vengeance to be distracted even by the cravings of his unnatural appetite, for here at last he had within his grasp the creature that had centred upon itself all the unbridled rage of a tyrant.

Trembling with the anger that he could not conceal, Lodivarman glared at Gordon King as the prisoner was led to the foot of the dais below his throne.

"Where is the girl?" demanded the King angrily.

"The Princess Fou-tan is safe in the palace of Beng Kher," replied King.

"How did you get her away? Some one must have helped you. If you would save yourself the anguish of torture, speak the truth," cried Lodivarman, his voice trembling with rage.

"Lodivarman, the King, knows better than any other how I took Fou-tan from him," replied the American.

"I do not mean that," screamed Lodivarman, trembling. "Siva will see that you suffer sufficient agonies for the indignity that you put upon me, but I can curtail that if you will reveal your accomplices."

"I had no accomplices," replied King. "I took the Princess and walked out of your palace and no one saw me."

"How did you get out?" demanded Lodivarman.

King smiled. "You are going to torture me, Lodivarman, and you are going to kill me. Why should I give you even the gratification of satisfying your curiosity? Wantonly you have already destroyed three men in your anger. I shall be the fourth. The life of any one of us is worth more than yours. If I could I would not add further to the debt that you must pay in the final accounting when you face God beyond the grave."

"What do you know, stranger, of the gods of the Khmers?" demanded Lodivarman.

"I know little or nothing of Brahma, of Vishnu, or Siva," replied King, "but I do know that above all there is a God that kings and tyrants must face; and in His eyes even a good king is not greater than a good slave, and of all creatures a tyrant is the most despicable."

"You would question the power of Brahma, of Vishnu, and of Siva!" hissed Lodivarman. "You dare to set your God above them! Before you die then, by the gods, you shall seek their mercy in your anguish."

"Whatever my suffering may be, you will be its author, Lodivarman," replied King. "The gods will have nothing to do with it."

A minor priest came near and whispered in the King's ear. Vay Thon, the high priest, was there, too. The old man stood with his eyes fixed compassionately upon King, but he knew he was powerless to aid his friend, for who should know better than a high priest the power of kings and the futility of gods.

The priest appeared to be urging something upon his ruler with considerable en-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

thusiasm.

Lodivarman listened to the whispered words of counsel, and then for some time he sat in thought. Presently he raised his eyes to King again. "It pleases us to prove the power of our Gods, revealing their omnipotence to the eyes of our people. My Lord the Tiger knows no god; you shall contend with him. If your God be so powerful let him preserve you from the beast." Lodivarman helped himself to mushrooms and sank back in his throne. "Take him to the pit of My Lord the Tiger," he said presently; "but do not liberate the great beast until we come."

The soldiers surrounded King and led him away, but before they had reached the doorway leading from the audience chamber Lodivarman halted them. "Wait!" he cried. "It shall not be said the Lodivarman is unfair even to an enemy. When this man enters the pit with My Lord the Tiger, see that he has a javelin wherewith to defend himself. I have heard stories of his prowess; let us see if they were exaggerated."

From the palace, King was led across the royal garden to the great temple of Siva; and there, upon one of the lower levels, a place where he had never been before, he was conducted to a small amphitheatre, in the centre of which was sunk a deep pit that was, perhaps, a hundred feet square. The entrance to the pit was down a stairway and along a narrow corridor of stone to massive wooden doors which the soldiers threw open.

"Enter, Gordon King," said Vama. "Here is my javelin, and may your God and my gods be with you."

"Thanks!" said King. "I imagine that I shall need them all," and then he stepped into the sunlit pit as the doors were closed behind him.

The floor and walls of the cubicle were of blocks of stone set without mortar, but so perfectly fitted that the joints were scarcely discernible. As King stood with his back against the doorway through which he had entered the pit, he saw in the wall opposite him another door of great planks, a low sinister door, behind which he guessed paced a savage, hungry carnivore.

King hefted the javelin in his hand. It was a sturdy, well-balanced weapon. Once again he recalled his college days when he had hurled a similar weapon beneath the admiring eyes of his mates; but then only distance had counted, only the superficial show that is the keynote of civilisation had mattered.

What mattered it that other men might cast a javelin more accurately? Which after all would be the practical test of efficiency. Gordon King could cast it farther than any of them, which was a feat far more showy than accuracy; but from the unlettered Che he had learned what college had failed to teach him and had acquired an accuracy as uncanny as the great distances that had won him fame.

Twice already had he met My Lord the Tiger and vanquished him with his javelin. Each time it had seemed to King a miracle. That it could be repeated again, that for the third time he could overcome the lord of Asia seemed incredible. And what would it profit him were he to succeed? From the cruel fangs and talons of the tiger he would be transferred to the greater cruelties of Lodivarman.

As he stood there upon the stone flagging of the pit beneath the hot sun that poured its unobstructed rays into the enclosure, he saw the audience sauntering to the stone

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

benches that encircled the arena. It was evident that those who were to witness his destruction were members of the household of the King; princes and nobles and warriors there were and ministers and priests, and with them were their women. Last of all came Lodivarman with his bodyguard and slaves. To a canopied throne he made his way while the audience knelt, the meeker of them touching their foreheads to the stone flagging of the aisles. Before his throne Lodivarman halted, while his dead eyes swept quickly over the assembly, passing from them to the arena and the solitary warrior standing there below him. For a long moment the gaze of the King was riveted upon the American; hatred and suppressed rage were in that long, venomous appraisal of the man who had thwarted and humiliated him—that low creature that had dared lay profaning hands upon the person of the King.

Slowly Lodivarman sank into his throne. Then he made a brief sign to an attendant, and an instant later the notes of a trumpet floated out across the still air of the arena. The kneeling men and women arose and took their seats. Once again Lodivarman raised his hand, and again the trumpet sounded, and every eye was turned upon the low doorway upon the opposite side of the arena from the American.

King saw the heavy barrier rise slowly. In the darkness beyond it nothing was visible at first, but presently he was aware that something moved within, and then he saw the familiar yellow and black stripes that he had expected. Slowly a great tiger stepped into the doorway, pausing upon the threshold, blinking from the glare of the sunlight. His attention was attracted first by the people upon the stone benches above him, and he looked up at them and growled. Then he looked down and saw King. Instantly his whole attitude changed. He half crouched, and his tail moved in sinuous undulations; his head was flattened, and his eyes glared fiercely.

Gordon King did not wait for the attack. He had a theory of his own based upon his experience with wild beasts. He knew them to be nervous and oftentimes timid when confronted by emergencies that offered aspects that were new and unfamiliar.

A gasp of astonishment, not unmingled with admiration, arose from the people lining the edges of the pit, for the thing that they witnessed was as surprising to them as King hoped it would be to the tiger—instead of the beast charging the man, they saw the man charging the beast. Straight toward the crouching carnivore King ran, his spear balanced and ready in his hand.

For an instant the tiger hesitated. He had expected nothing like this; and then he did what King had hoped that he might do, what he had known there was a fair chance that he would do. Fearful of the new and unexpected, the beast turned and broke, and as he did so he exposed his left side fully and at close range to the quick eye of his antagonist.

Swift as lightning moved King's spear-arm. The heavy javelin, cast with unerring precision and backed to the last ounce by the strength and the weight of the American, tore into the striped side just behind the left shoulder of the great beast. At the instant that the weapon left his hand King turned and raced to the far extremity of the arena. The running tiger, carried by his own momentum, rolled over and over upon the stone flagging; his horrid screams and coughing roars shook the amphitheatre. King was positive that the beast's heart was pierced, but he knew that these great cats were so tenacious of life that in the brief instant of their dying they often destroyed their adversaries also. It

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

was for this reason that he had put as much distance as he could between himself and the infuriated animal, and it was well that he had done so, for the instant that the tiger had regained his feet he discovered King and charged straight for him.

Unarmed and helpless, the man stood waiting. Breathless, the spectators had arisen from their stone benches and were bending eagerly forward in tense anticipation of the cruel and bloody end.

Half the length of the arena the tiger crossed in great bounds. A sudden conviction swept the man that after all he had missed the heart. He was poised for what he already knew must be a futile leap to one side in an effort to dodge the first charge of the onrushing beast, when suddenly the tiger collapsed, seemingly in mid-air; and his great carcass came rolling across the flagging to stop at King's feet.

For an instant there was utter silence, and then a great shout rose from the spectators. "He has won his life, Lodivarman! He has won his freedom!" arose here and there from the braver among them, and the others cheered in approval.

Lodivarman, crouching in his throne with an ugly sneer upon his lips, called a functionary to him for a few, brief whispered instructions, and then the Leper King arose and passed through the kneeling people as he departed from the amphitheatre.

A moment later the door that had opened to admit King to the pit creaked again upon its hinges to admit Vama and an escort of warriors.

King greeted his former comrade with a smile. "Have you come to finish the work that the tiger failed to do," he asked, "or have you come to escort me to freedom?"

"Neither," replied Vama. "We have come to return you to your cell, for such are the commands of the King. But if he does not set you free eventually," added Vama in low tones, "it will be to the lasting disgrace of Lodivarman, for never was a man more deserving of his life and liberty than you. You are the first man, Gordon King, who has ever faced the tiger in this pit and come out alive."

"Which does not at all satisfy Lodivarman's craving for revenge," suggested the American.

"I am afraid you are right," said Vama, as they moved along the corridor toward the dungeon, "but you must know that to-day you have made many new friends in Lodidhapura, for there are those among us who can appreciate courage, strength and skill."

"My mistake," said King, "was not in my selection of friends, but in my selection of an enemy; for the latter, I have found one from whom all the friends in the world may not save me."

Once again in his gloomy, cheerless cell King was fettered to the cold, familiar stone; but he was cheered by the kind words of Vama and the friendly expressions of other members of the guard that had escorted him hither; and when presently a slave came with food he, too, had words of praise and friendliness; and the food that he brought was well prepared and plentiful.

The day passed and the long night followed, and toward the middle of the next forenoon a visitor came to King's cell; and as he paused in the doorway, the prisoner recognised the yellow robe and the white beard of Vay Thon, the high priest of Siva, and

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

his face lighted with pleasure, as the old man peered into the dim interior of his prison.

"Welcome, Vay Thon!" he exclaimed, "and accept my apologies for the mean hospitality that I may offer so distinguished and so welcome a guest."

"Give that no thought, my son," replied the old man. "It is enough that so courageous a warrior should receive a poor old priest with such pleasure as is evidenced by your tone. I am glad to be with you, but I wish that it might be under happier circumstances and that I might be the bearer of more welcome news."

"You have brought news to me, then?" asked King.

"Yes," replied Vay Thon. "Because of what I owe you and for the friendship that I feel for you I have come to warn you, though any warning of your impending doom can avail you nothing."

"Lodivarman will not give me my liberty or my life, then?" asked King.

"No," replied Vay Thon. "The affront that you put upon him he considers beyond forgiveness. You are to be destroyed, but in such a way that the responsibility shall not rest upon the shoulders of Lodivarman."

"And how is this to be accomplished?" asked the American.

"You are to be summoned to the audience chamber of Lodivarman to receive your freedom and then you are to be set upon and assassinated by members of his guard. The story is to be spread that you sought to take the life of Lodivarman, so that his soldiers were compelled to slay you."

"Vay Thon," said King, "perhaps the warning that you bring me may not save me from the fate that Lodivarman has ordained; but it has demonstrated your friendship; and my last hours, therefore, will be happier because you came. And now go, for if the knowledge that you have imparted prompts me to take advantage of some opportunity for revenge or escape, there must be no clue to suggest that you are in any way responsible."

"I appreciate your thoughtfulness, my friend," replied the old priest, "and as I can be of no service to you I shall leave you, but know that constantly I shall supplicate the gods to protect you." He came and placed his hands upon King's shoulders. "Good-bye, my son, my heart is heavy," and as the tears welled in his old eyes he turned and left the cell.

Vay Thon had been gone but a short time when King heard the sound of footsteps approaching, and with these were mingled the clank of armour and the rattling of accoutrements. Presently, when the men halted before the doorway of his cell, he saw that they were all strangers to him. The officer who commanded them entered the cell, greeting King pleasantly.

"I bring you good news," he said, as he stooped and unlocked the padlock and cast King's fetters from him.

"Any news would be good news here," replied the American.

"But this is the best of all news," said the officer. "Lodivarman has commanded that you be conducted to him that he may grant you your freedom in person."

"Splendid," said King, though he could scarcely repress a smile as he recalled the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

message that Vay Thon had brought him.

Back to the now familiar audience chamber of the King they conducted the prisoner, and once again he stood before the throne of Lodivarman.

There were few in attendance upon the monarch, a fact which suggested that he had not cared to share the secret of his perfidy with more than was absolutely necessary. But few though they were, the inevitable slave was there, kneeling at Lodivarman's side with his platter of mushrooms; and it was the sight of these lowly fungi that instantly riveted the attention of the doomed man, for suddenly they had become more important than brass-bound soldiers, than palace functionaries, than the King himself, for they had suggested to the American a possible means of salvation.

He knew that he must think and act quickly, for he had no means of knowing how soon the signal for his assassination would be given.

Surrounded by his guards, he crossed the audience chamber and halted before the throne of Lodivarman. He should have prostrated himself then, but he did not; instead he looked straight into the dead eyes of the tyrant.

"Lodivarman," he said, "listen to me for a moment before you give the signal that will put into execution the plan that you have conceived, for at this instant your own life and happiness hang in the balance."

"What do you mean?" demanded Lodivarman.

"You questioned the power of my God, Lodivarman," continued King, "but you saw me vanquish My Lord the Tiger in the face of the wrath of Siva, and now you know that I am aware of just what you planned for me here. How could I have vanquished the beast, or how could I have known your plans except through the intervention and the favour of my God?"

Lodivarman seemed ill at ease. His eyes shifted suspiciously from one man to another. "I have been betrayed," he said angrily.

"On the contrary," replied King, "you have been given such an opportunity as never could have come to you without me. Will you hear me before I am slain?"

"I do not know what you are talking about. I sent for you to free you; but speak on, I am listening."

"You are a leper," said King, and at the hideous word Lodivarman sprang to his feet, trembling with rage, his face livid, his dead eyes glaring.

"Death to him!" he cried. "No man may speak that accursed word to me and live."

At Lodivarman's words warriors sprang menacingly toward King. "Wait!" cried the American. "You have told me that you would listen. Wait until I have spoken, for what I have to say means more to you than life itself."

"Speak, then, but be quick," snapped Lodivarman.

"In the great country from which I come," continued King, "there are many brilliant physicians who have studied all of the diseases to which mankind is heir. I, too, am a physician, and under many of those men have I studied and particularly have I studied the disease of leprosy. Lodivarman, you believe this disease to be incurable; but I, the man whom you would destroy, can cure you."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

King's voice, well modulated but clear and distinct, had carried his words to every man in the audience chamber, and the silence which followed this dramatic declaration was so profound that one might have said that no man even breathed. All felt the tenseness of the moment.

Lodivarman, who had sunk back into his throne after his wild outburst of anger, seemed almost to have collapsed. He was trembling visibly, his lower jaw dropped upon his chest. King knew that the man was impressed, that all within the audience chamber were impressed, and his knowledge of human nature told him that he had won, for he knew that Lodivarman, king though he was, was only human and that he would grasp at even the most impalpable suggestion of hope that might be offered him in the extremity of his fear and loathing for the disease that claimed him.

Presently the tyrant found his voice. "You can cure me?" he asked, almost piteously.

"My life shall be the forfeit," replied King, "on condition that you swear before your gods in the presence of Vay Thon, the high priest, that in return for your health you will grant me life and liberty—"

"Life, liberty, and every honour that lies within my power shall be conferred upon you," cried Lodivarman, his voice trembling with emotion. "If you rid me of this horrid sickness, aught that you ask shall be granted. Come, let us not delay. Cure me at once."

"The sickness has held you for many years, Lodivarman," replied King, "and it cannot be cured in a day. I must prepare medicine, and you must carry out the instructions that I shall give you, for I can cure you only if you obey me implicitly."

"How do I know that you will not poison me?" demanded Lodivarman.

King thought for a moment. Here was an obstacle that he had not foreseen, and then suddenly a solution suggested itself. "I can satisfy you as to that, Lodivarman," he replied, "for when I prepare medicine for you I shall take some of it myself in your presence."

Lodivarman nodded. "That will safeguard me," he said, "and now what else?"

"Put me where Vay Thon, the high priest, can watch me always. You trust him, and he will see that no harm befalls you through me. He will help me to obtain the medicine that I require, and to-morrow I shall be ready to commence the treatment. But in the meantime your system must be prepared to permit the medicine to take effect, and in this I can do nothing without your co-operation."

"Speak!" said Lodivarman. "Whatever you suggest I shall do."

"Have every mushroom in Lodidhapura destroyed," said King. "Have your slave burn those that have been prepared, and determine never to taste another."

Lodivarman scowled angrily. "What have mushrooms to do with the cure?" he demanded. "They afford me the only pleasure that I have in life. This is naught but a trick to annoy and discomfort me."

"As you will," said King with a shrug. "I can cure you, but only if you obey my instructions. My medicines will have no effect if you continue to eat mushrooms. But it is up to you, Lodivarman. Do as you choose."

For a time the ruler sat tapping nervously upon the arm of his throne, and then sud-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

denly and almost savagely he turned upon the kneeling slave at his side. "Throw out the accursed things," he cried. "Throw them out! Destroy them! Burn them! And never let me set my eyes upon you again."

Trembling, the slave departed, carrying the platter of mushrooms with him, and then Lodivarman directed his attention upon one of the officers of his household. "Destroy the royal mushroom bed," he cried, "and see to it that you do it thoroughly," and then to another, "Summon Vay Thon." As the officers left the room Lodivarman turned to King again. "How long will it be before I am cured?" he asked.

"I cannot tell that until I see how you react to my medicine," replied the American; "but I believe that you will see almost immediate improvement. It may be very slow, and on the other hand, it may come very rapidly."

While they waited for Vay Thon, Lodivarman plied King with question after question; and now that he was convinced that men had been cured of leprosy and that he himself might be cured, a great change seemed to come over him. It was as though a new man had been born; his whole aspect appeared to change, as the hideous burden of fear and hopelessness that he had carried for so many years was dissipated by the authoritative manner and confident pronouncement of the American. And when Vay Thon entered the audience chamber, he saw a smile upon Lodivarman's face for the first time in so many years that he had almost forgotten that the man could smile.

Quickly Lodivarman explained the situation to Vay Thon and gave him his instructions relative to the American, for he wished the latter to hasten the preparation of his medicine.

"To-morrow," he cried, as the two men were backing from the apartment, "to-morrow my cure shall commence." And Gordon King did not tell him that his cure already had started, that it had started the instant that he had given orders for the destruction of the royal mushroom bed, for he did not wish Lodivarman to know what he knew—that the man was not a leper and never had been, that what in his ignorance he had thought was leprosy was nothing more than an aggravated form of dermatitis, resulting from food poisoning. At least King prayed that his diagnosis was correct.

From the quarters of Vay Thon slaves were despatched into the jungle for many strange herbs and roots, and from these King compounded three prescriptions, but the basis of each was a mild laxative. The purpose of the other ingredients was chiefly to add impressiveness and mystery to the compounds, for however much King might deplore this charlatanism he was keenly aware that he must not permit the cure to appear too simple. He was dealing with a primitive mind, and he was waging a battle of wits for his life—conditions which seemed to warrant the adoption of means that are not altogether frowned upon by the most ethical of modern practitioners.

Three times a day he went in person to a small audience chamber off the bedroom of Lodivarman, and there, in the presence of Vay Thon and officers of the royal household, he tasted the medicine himself before administering it to Lodivarman. Upon the third day it became apparent that the sores upon the body of the King were drying up. Exsiccation was so manifest that Lodivarman was jubilant. He laughed and joked with those about him and renewed his assurances to the American that no reward within the power

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

of his giving would be denied him when Lodivarman was again a whole man. Each day thereafter the improvement was marked and rapid, until, at the end of three weeks, no trace remained of the hideous sores that had so horribly disfigured the monarch for so many years.

Gradually King had been diminishing the dosages that he had been administering and had tapered off the treatment from three to two a day and finally to one. Upon the twenty-first day King ordered Lodivarman to his bedroom; and there, in the presence of Vay Thon and three of the highest officers of the kingdom, he examined the King's entire body and found the skin clear, healthy, and without blemish.

"Well?" demanded Lodivarman, when the examination had been completed.

"Your Majesty is cured," said King.

The King arose from his bed and threw a robe about him. "Life and liberty are yours, Gordon King," he said. "A palace, slaves, riches are at your disposal. You have proven yourself a great warrior and a great physician. If you will remain here you shall be an officer in the royal guard and the private physician of Lodivarman, the King."

"There is but one reason why I care to remain in the land of the Khmers," replied King, "and that reason you must know, Lodivarman, before I can accept the honours that you would bestow upon me."

"And what is that?" demanded Lodivarman.

"To be as near as possible to the Princess Foutan of Pnom Dhek in the hope that some day I may claim her hand in marriage as already I have won her love."

"Already have I forgiven you for that act of yours which deprived me of the girl," said Lodivarman, without an instant's hesitation. "If you can win her, I shall place no obstacles in your path, but on the contrary I shall assist you in every way within my power. Let no man say that the gratitude of Lodivarman is tinged with selfishness or with revenge."

Lodivarman did even more than he had promised, for he created Gordon King a prince of Khmer, and so it was that the American found himself elevated from the position of the condemned criminal to that of the titled master of a palace—a lord over many slaves and the commander of five hundred Khmer warriors.

Great was the rejoicing in Lodidhapura when the King's cure became known; and for a week the city was given over to dancing, to pageants, and to celebration. In the howdah of the royal elephant at Lodivarman's side, King rode along the avenues of Lodidhapura in the van of a procession of a thousand elephants trapped in gorgeous silks and gold and jewels.

And then upon the last day, when the rejoicing was at its height, all was changed in the brief span of an instant. A sweat-streaked, exhausted messenger staggered to the gates of Lodidhapura; and ere he swooned from fatigue he gasped out his brief message to the captain of the gates.

"Beng Kher comes with a great army to avenge the insult to his Princess," and then he fell unconscious at the feet of the officer.

Quickly was the word carried to Lodivarman and quickly did it spread through the city of Lodidhapura. The gay trappings of a fete vanished like magic to be replaced by

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

the grim trappings of war. Well worn and darkened with age were the housings and harnesses of the elephants as a thousand strong they filed from the north gates of Lodidhapura, bearing upon their backs the sturdy archers and spearmen of Lodivarman; and with them rode Gordon King, the prince, at the head of his new command. Alone upon a swift elephant he rode with only the mahout seated before him on the head of the great beast.

Little or nothing did the American know of the tactics of Khmer warfare, except that which he had derived from fellow warriors while he served among them and from other officers since his appointment. He had learned that the battles consisted principally of individual combat between elephant crews and that the duties of an officer did little more than constitute him a focal point upon which his men might rally for the pursuit if the enemy broke and retreated.

With long, rolling strides the elephants of war swung along the avenue into the jungle. Here and there were bits of colour or a glint of sunlight on a shining buckle, but for the most part the beasts were caparisoned with stern simplicity for the business of war. From the howdahs the burnished cuirasses of the warriors gave back the sunlight, and from the shaft of many a spear floated a coloured ribbon. The men themselves were grim and silent, or moved to coarse jokes and oaths as suited the individuality of each; and the music was from rough-throated trumpets and booming drums.

Toward a great clearing the army made its way and there awaited the coming of Beng Kher, for wars between Lodidhapura and Pnom Dhek were governed by age-old custom. Here for a thousand years their armies had met whenever Pnom Dhek attacked Lodidhapura. Here the first engagement must take place; and if the soldiers of Beng Kher could not pass the forces of Lodivarman, they must turn back in defeat. It was a game of war governed by strict rules up to the point where one side broke and fled. If the troops of Lodivarman broke here they would be pursued to the gates of Lodidhapura; and there, within the walls of the city, they would make their final stand. But if Beng Kher's troops broke first, Lodivarman could take credit for a victory and might pursue them or not as he chose. To elude one another by strategy, to attempt to gain the rear of an enemy were not to be countenanced, largely so, perhaps, from the fact that flanking and enveloping movements were impossible with elephant troops in a dense forest, where the only avenues of advance or retreat were the well-marked trails that were known to all.

The clearing, along the south side of which the troops of Lodivarman were drawn up, was some two miles in length by a half or three-quarters of a mile in width. The ground was slightly rolling and almost entirely denuded of vegetation, since it was in almost constant use for the training and drilling of elephant troops.

As the last of the great pachyderms wheeled into place, the drums and the trumpets were silent; and from out of the north, to the listening ears of the warriors, came faintly the booming of Pnom Dhek's war drums. The enemy was approaching. The men looked to arrows and bowstrings. The mahouts spoke soothingly and encouragingly to their mighty charges. The officers rode slowly up and down the line in front of their men, exhorting them to deeds of courage. As the sound of the enemy drums and trumpets drew nearer, the elephants became noticeably nervous. They swayed from side to side, raising and lowering their trunks and flapping their great ears.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

In each howdah were many extra spears and great quantities of arrows. King, alone, had twenty spears in his howdah and fully a hundred arrows. When he had first seen them loaded upon his elephant it had not seemed possible that he was to use them against other men, and he had found himself rather shrinking from contemplation of the thought; but now with the sound of the war drums in his ears and the smell of leather and the stink of war elephants in his nostrils and with that long line of grim faces and burnished cuirasses at his back, he felt a sudden mad blood lust that thrilled him to the depths of his being. No longer was he the learned and cultured gentleman of the twentieth century, but as much a Khmer warrior as ever drew a bow for ancient Yacovarman, The King of Glory.

The enemy is coming. The blare of his trumpets resounds across the field of battle, and now the head of the enemy column emerges on to the field. The trumpets of Lodidhapura blare and her drums boom. An elephant lifts his trunk and trumpets shrilly. It is with difficulty now that the mahouts hold their charges in line.

The enemy line is finally formed upon the opposite side of the great field. For a moment drums and trumpets are stilled, and then a hoarse fanfare rolls across the clearing from the trumpeters of Beng Kher. "We are ready," it seems to say, and instantly it is answered from Lodivarman's side. Simultaneously now the two lines advance upon one another; and for a moment there is a semblance of order and discipline, but presently here and there an elephant forges ahead of his fellows. They break into a trot. King is almost run down by his own men.

"Forward!" he shouts to his mahout.

Pandemonium has broken loose. Trumpets and drums merge with the battle cries of ten thousand warriors. The elephants, goaded to anger, scream and trumpet in their rage. As the two lines converge, the bowmen loose a shower of arrows from either side; and now the curses and cries of wounded men and the shrill screaming of hurt elephants mingle with the trumpets and the bugles and the war cries in the mad diapason of war.

King found himself carried forward on the crest of battle straight toward a lone officer of the enemy forces. He was riding the swaying howdah now like a sailor on the deck of a storm-tossed ship. The antagonist approaching him was balancing his javelin, waiting until they should come within surer range; but King did not wait. He was master of his weapon, and he had no doubts. Behind him were his men. He did not know that they were watching him; but they were, for he was a new officer and this his first engagement. His standing with them would be determined now forever. All of them had heard of his prowess and many of them had doubted the truth of the stories they had heard. They saw his spear-arm come back, they saw the heavy weapon flying through the air and a hoarse cheer broke from their throats as the point crashed through the burnished cuirass of the enemy.

An instant later the two lines came together with such terrific force that a score of elephants were overthrown. King was almost pitched from his howdah; and an instant later he was fighting hand to hand, surrounded by the warriors of Beng Kher. The battle now resolved itself into a slow milling of elephants as the mahouts sought to gain advantageous positions for the crews in their howdahs. Here and there a young elephant, or one sorely wounded and driven mad by pain, broke from the melee and bolted for the

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

jungle. Warriors leaped from their howdahs, risking injury rather than the almost certain death that would await them as the frightened beasts stampeded through the forest. Only the mahouts clung to their posts, facing death rather than the disgrace of abandoning their charges. The hot sun blazed down upon the stinking, sweating mass of war. The feet of the milling elephants raised clouds of dust through which it was sometimes difficult to see more than a few yards.

In the moment that King was surrounded an arrow grazed his arm, while a dozen glanced from his helmet and his cuirass. His impressions were confused. He saw savage, distorted faces before him, at which he lunged with a long javelin. He was choked with dust and blinded by sweat. He heard the savage trumpeting of his own elephant and the shouts and curses of his mahout. It seemed impossible that he could extricate himself from such a position, or that he could long survive the vicious attack that was being directed upon him by the men of the officer he had slain; and then some of his own elephants came charging in, and a moment later he was surrounded by the warriors of his own command.

Ever forward they pushed. What was happening elsewhere in the line they did not know, for obscuring dust hid all but those close to them. The line before them gave; and then it held and pushed them back again, and so the battle surged to and fro and back and forth. But always it seemed to King that his side gained a little more at each advance than it lost. Presently the enemy line gave way entirely. King saw the elephants of Pnom Dhek turn in the murky dust and race toward the north. Just what the rest of the line was doing he did not know; and for the moment none of his own men was visible, so thick and heavy hung the pall of dust upon the field of battle.

Perhaps King forgot what little of the rules of Khmer warfare he had ever learned. Perhaps he thought only of following up an advantage already gained; but be that as it may, he shouted to his men to follow and ordered his mahout to pursue the fleeing warriors to Pnom Dhek. Amid the din of battle his men did not hear him, and so it was that, alone, Gordon King pursued that part of the enemy line that had broken directly in front of him.

Presently, as they drew away from the centre of the field and the dust clouds became less impenetrable, King saw the grey bulk of an elephant moving just ahead of him; and then as the visibility increased he saw still other enemy elephants farther in advance. Now he could see that there were two men in the howdah of the elephant just in front of him; but as he raised his javelin to cast it, he suddenly recognised the man at whom his weapon was to be directed—it was Beng Kher, King of Pnom Dhek and father of Fou-tan. King lowered his spear-arm; he could not slay the father of the girl he loved. But who was his companion? Through the lessening dust King sensed a vague familiarity in that figure. It occurred to him that he might take Beng Kher prisoner and thus force him to sanction his marriage with Fou-tan. Other mad schemes passed through his head as the two swift elephants raced across the clearing.

Neither Beng Kher nor his companion appeared to be paying any attention to the warrior pursuing them, which convinced King that they believed him to be one of their own men. King saw Beng Kher's companion lean forward over the front of the howdah as though issuing instructions to the mahout; and almost immediately their course was

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

changed to the right, while ahead of them King saw the other elephants that had accompanied Beng Kher disappearing into the forest to the north.

The air about them was comparatively free from dust now, so that King could see all that transpired about him. He glanced behind; and from the clouds of dust arising from the centre of the field he knew that the battle was still raging, but he kept on in pursuit of the King of Pnom Dhek.

To his dismay he saw that the royal elephant was drawing away from him, being swifter than his own. He saw something else, too—he saw Beng Kher remonstrating with his companion, and then for the first time he recognised the other man in the howdah as Bharata Rahon.

King was exhorting his mahout to urge the elephant to greater speed; and when he glanced up again at the two men in the howdah ahead of him, he saw Bharata Rahon suddenly raise a knife and plunge it into the neck of Beng Kher. The King staggered backward; and before he could regain his equilibrium Bharata Rahon leaped forward and gave him a tremendous shove, and King saw Beng Kher, the ruler of Pnom Dhek, topple backward out of the howdah and plunge to the ground below.

Horried by the ruthless crime he had witnessed and moved by the thought of Fou-tan's love for her father, King ordered his mahout to bring their elephant to a stop; and then sliding quickly from the howdah, he ran to where Beng Kher lay. The King was half stunned and blood was gushing from the wound in his neck. As best he could and as quickly, King stanchd the flow; but what was he to do? Beng Kher was indeed his prisoner, but what would it profit him now?

He signalled his mahout to bring the elephant closer and make it lie down, and then the two men lifted the wounded Beng Kher into the howdah.

"What do you want with a wounded enemy?" demanded the mahout, and it was evident to King that the fellow had not recognised Beng Kher as King of Pnom Dhek. "Why do you not kill him?" continued the man.

"You were detailed to drive my elephant and not to question my acts," snapped King shortly, and whatever thoughts concerning the matter the mahout had thereafter he kept to himself.

"Whither, my lord?" he asked presently.

That was the very question that was bothering King—whither! Were he to take Beng Kher back to Lodidhapura, he did not know but that Lodivarman might destroy him. If he tried to take him back to Pnom Dhek, Beng Kher might die before they reached the city, or if he lived, doubtless he would see that King died shortly thereafter. The American had no love for Beng Kher, but if he could protect Fou-tan from grief by saving the life of her father, he would do so if he could but find the means; and presently a possible solution of his problem occurred to him.

He turned to his mahout. "I wish to go to the jungle south of Lodidhapura, avoiding the city and all men upon the way. Do you understand?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the man.

"Then make haste. I must reach a certain spot before dark. When we have passed Lodidhapura I will give you further directions."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Little Uda was playing before the dwelling of Che and Kangrey when he heard a sound that was familiar to him—the approach of an elephant along the jungle trail that passed not far from where he played. Now and then elephants passed that way and sometimes little Uda saw them, but more often he did not. Uda and Che and Kangrey had no fear of these passing elephants, for the massive stone ruin in which they lived was off the beaten trail among a jumble of fallen ruins that was little Likely to tempt the feet of the great pachyderms; so little Uda played on, giving scant heed to the approaching footsteps, but presently his keen ears noted what his eyes could not see; and leaping to his feet, he ran quickly into the dwelling, where Kangrey was preparing food for the evening meal before the return of Che.

“Mamma,” cried Uda, “an elephant is coming. He has left the trail and is coming here.”

Kangrey stepped to the doorway. To her astonishment she saw an elephant coming straight toward her dwelling. She only saw his feet and legs at first; and then, as he emerged from behind a tree that had hidden the upper part of his body, the woman gave a cry of alarm, for she saw that the elephant was driven by a mahout and that there was a warrior in the howdah upon its back. Grasping Uda by the hand, she sprang from her dwelling, bent upon escaping from the feared power of Lodivarman; but a familiar voice halted her, calling her by name.

“Do not be afraid, Kangrey,” came the reassuring voice. “It is I, Gordon King.”

The woman stopped and turned back, a smile of welcome upon her face. “Thanks be to the gods that it is you, Gordon King, and not another,” she exclaimed. “But what brings you thus upon a great elephant and in the livery of Lodivarman to the poor dwelling of Kangrey?”

The mahout had brought the elephant to a stop now before Kangrey’s doorway, and at his command the great beast lowered its huge body to the ground.

“I have brought a wounded warrior to you, Kangrey,” said King, “to be nursed back to life and health as once you nursed me,” and with the help of the mahout he lifted Beng Kher from the howdah.

“For you, Gordon King, Kangrey would nurse Lodivarman himself,” said the woman.

They carried Beng Kher into the dwelling and laid him upon a pallet of dry grasses and leaves covered with the pelts of wild animals. Together King and Kangrey removed the golden cuirass from the fallen monarch. Taking off the rough bandages with which the American had stanching the flow of blood and covered the wounds, the woman bathed the gashes with water brought by Uda. Her deft fingers worked lightly and quickly; and while she prepared new bandages she sent Uda into the jungle to fetch certain leaves, which she laid upon the wounds beneath the bandages.

The mahout had returned to his elephant; and as Kangrey and King were kneeling upon opposite sides of the wounded man, Beng Kher opened his eyes. For a moment they roved without comprehension about the interior of the rude dwelling and from the face of the woman leaning above him to that of the man, upon whom he noted the harness of Lodivarman, and King saw that Beng Kher did not recognise him.

“Where am I?” asked the wounded man. “What has happened? But I need not ask. I

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

fell in battle and I am a prisoner in the hands of my enemy."

"No," replied King, "you are in the hands of friends, Beng Kher. This woman will nurse you back to health; after that we shall decide what is to be done."

"Who are you?" demanded Beng Kher, scrutinising the features of his captor.

From beneath his cuirass and his leather tunic the American withdrew a tiny ring that was suspended about his neck on a golden chain, and when Beng Kher saw it he voiced an exclamation of surprise.

"It is Fou-tan's," he said. "How came you by it, man?"

"Do you not recognise me?" demanded the American.

"By Siva, you are the strange warrior who dared aspire to the love of the Princess of Pnom Dhek. The gods have deserted me."

"Why do you say that?" demanded King. "I think they have been damn' good to you."

"They have delivered me into the hands of one who may profit most by destroying me," replied Beng Kher.

"On the contrary, they have been kind to you, for they have given you into the keeping of the man who loves your daughter. That love, Beng Kher, is your shield and your buckler. It has saved you from death, and it will see that you are brought back to health."

For a while the King of Pnom Dhek lay silent, lost in meditation, but presently he spoke again. "How came I to this sorry pass?" he asked. "We were well out of the battle, Bharata Rahon and I— by Siva, I remember now!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"I saw what happened, Beng Kher," said King. "I was pursuing you and was but a short distance behind when I saw Bharata Rahon suddenly stab you and then throw you from the howdah of your elephant."

Beng Kher nodded. "I remember it all now," he said. "The traitorous scoundrel! Fou-tan warned me against him, but I would not believe her. There were others who warned me, but I was stubborn. He thought he had killed me, eh? but he has not. I shall recover and have my revenge, but it will be too late to save Fou-tan."

"What do you mean?" demanded Gordon King.

"I can see his plan now as plainly as though he had told me in his own words," said Beng Kher. "By now he is on his way to Pnom Dhek. He will tell them that I fell in battle. He will force Fou-tan to marry him, and thus he will become King of Pnom Dhek. Ah, if I had but one of my own people here I could thwart him yet."

"I am here," said Gordon King, "and it means more to me to prevent Bharata Rahon from carrying out his design than it could to any other man." He rose to his feet.

"Where are you going?" demanded Beng Kher.

"I am going to Pnom Dhek," replied King, "and if I am not too late I shall save Fou-tan; and if I am, I shall make her a widow."

"Wait," said Beng Kher. He slipped a massive ring from one of his fingers and held it out to the American. "Take this," he said. "In Pnom Dhek it will confer upon you the authority of Beng Kher, the King. Use it as you see fit to save Fou-tan and to bring Bharata Rahon to justice. Farewell, Gordon King, and may the gods protect you and give you

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

strength.”

Gordon King ran from the dwelling and leaped into the howdah of his elephant. “Back to Lodidhapura,” he commanded the mahout, “and by the shortest route as fast as the beast can travel.”

Lodivarman, the King, was resting after the battle that had brought victory to his arms. Never had he been in a happier mood; never had the gods been so kind to him. Free from the clutches of the loathsome disease that had gripped him for so many years and now victorious over his ancient enemy, Lodivarman had good reason for rejoicing. Yet there was a shadow upon his happiness, for he had lost many brave soldiers and officers during the engagement, and not the least of these was the new prince, Gordon King, whom he looked upon not only as his saviour, but as his protector from disease in the future. At his orders many men had searched the battlefield for the body of his erstwhile enemy, whom he now considered his most cherished captain; but no trace of it had been found, nor of his elephant nor his mahout; and it was the consensus of opinion that the beast, frenzied by wounds and terrified by the din of conflict, had bolted into the forest and that both men had been killed as the elephant plunged beneath the branches of great trees. A hundred warriors still were searching through the jungle, but no word had come from them. There could be but slight hope that the new prince lived.

While Lodivarman lay upon his royal couch, grieving perhaps more for himself than for Gordon King, a palace functionary was announced. “Admit him,” said Lodivarman.

The courtier entered the apartment and dropped to one knee. “What word bring you?” demanded the King.

“The prince, Gordon King, seeks audience with Lodivarman,” announced the official.

“What?” demanded Lodivarman, raising himself to a sitting position upon the edge of his couch. “He lives? He has returned?”

“He is alive and unhurt, Your Majesty,” replied the man.

“Fetch him at once,” commanded Lodivarman, and a moment later Gordon King was ushered into his presence.

“The gods have been kind indeed,” said Lodivarman. “We thought that you had fallen in battle.”

“No,” replied King. “I pursued the enemy too far into the jungle, but in doing so I discovered something that means more to me than my life, Lodivarman, and I have come to you to enlist your aid.”

“You have but to ask and it shall be granted,” replied the King.

“The prince, Bharata Rahon, of Pnom Dhek, assassinated Beng Kher and is now hastening back to Pnom Dhek to force the Princess, Fou-tan, to wed him; and I have hastened to you to ask for men and elephants wherewith I may pursue Bharata Rahon and save Fou-tan from his treachery.”

Perhaps this was a bitter pill for Lodivarman to swallow, for no man, not even a king, may easily forget humiliation—perhaps a king least of all—and he did not like to be reminded that Fou-tan had spurned him and that this man had taken her from him. But more powerful than his chagrin was his sincere gratitude to Gordon King, and so it is

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

only fair to record that he did not hesitate an instant when he had heard the American's request.

"You shall have everything that you require—warriors, elephants, everything. You have heard?" he demanded, turning to an official standing near him.

The man nodded. "It is the King's command, then," continued Lodivarman, "that the prince be furnished at once with all he requires."

"A hundred elephants and five hundred men will answer my purpose," said King, "the swiftest elephants and the bravest warriors."

"You shall have them," said Lodivarman.

"I thank Your Majesty," said King. "And now permit me to depart, for if I am to be successful there is no time to lose."

"Go," said Lodivarman, "and may the gods accompany you."

Within the hour a hundred elephants and five hundred warriors swung through the north gate of Lodidhapura along the broad avenue beyond and into the jungle.

Far to the north, hastening through the forest to Pnom Dhek, moved Beng Kher's defeated army; and in the van was the Prince, Bharata Rahon, gloating in anticipation over the fruits of his villainy. Already was he demanding and receiving the rights and prerogatives of royalty, for he had spread the word that Beng Kher had been killed in battle and that he was hastening to Pnom Dhek to wed the Princess Fou-tan.

Early in the forenoon of the second day following the battle, Fou-tan, from her palace window, saw the column of returning elephants and warriors emerge from the forest. That the trumpets and the drums were mute told her that defeat had fallen upon the forces of the King, her father, and there were tears in her eyes as she turned away from the window and threw herself upon her couch.

Perhaps an hour later one of her little ladies-in-waiting came to her. "The Prince, Bharata Rahon, awaits you in the audience chamber, my Princess," she said.

"Has not my father, the King, sent for me?" demanded Fou-tan.

"The Prince brings word from your father," replied the girl, and there was that in her tone more than in her words that sent a qualm of apprehension through the heart of the little Princess.

She arose quickly. "Send word to Bharata Rahon, the Prince, that the Princess comes," she said. Quickly her slaves attended to her toilet, removing the traces that the tears had left and replacing the loosened strands of her hair.

In the corridor outside of her apartment awaited the functionaries that would accompany her to the audience chamber and Indra Sen in command of a detachment of the warriors of her guard, for the little Princess Fou-tan moved only with pomp and ceremony.

Through her own private entrance she came into the audience chamber, where she saw congregated the high officers of Pnom Dhek, the priests of the temple, and the captains in their burnished cuirasses and helmets; and as she came they knelt until she had reached the foot of the empty throne, where Bharata Rahon stood to receive her.

"Where is the King, my father?" she asked in a frightened voice.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"Beloved Princess," replied Bharata Rahon, "I bring you sad news."

"The King is dead!" cried Fou-tan.

Bharata Rahon inclined his head in assent. "He fell in battle bravely," he said, "but before he died he entrusted to me his last command to you."

"Speak," said the girl.

"It is believed that Lodivarman will follow up his victory and attack Pnom Dhek, and in addition to this we are threatened by enemies within our own walls—conditions which require a king upon the throne; and so it was your father's dying command that you wed at once, that Pnom Dhek may be ruled and guided by a man through the dangers which confront her."

"And the man that I am to marry is you, of course," said Fou-tan coldly.

"Who other could it be, my Princess?" asked Bharata Rahon.

"This is a matter which I do not care to discuss in public audience," said Fou-tan. "After a suitable period of mourning for my father, the King, we may perhaps speak of the matter again."

Bharata Rahon quelled the anger that arose in his heart and spoke in soft tones. "I can well appreciate the feelings of Your Majesty at this time," he said, "but the matter is urgent. Please dismiss everyone and listen to me in patience for a moment."

"Send them away then," said Fou-tan wearily, and when the audience chamber had been cleared, she nodded to Bharata Rahon. "Speak," she said, "but please be brief."

"Fou-tan," said the Prince, "I would that you would wed me willingly, but the time now has passed for all childishness. We must be wed tonight. It is imperative. I can be King without you, for I have the men and the power. But there are others who would rally around you, and Pnom Dhek would be so weakened by civil war that it would fall an easy prey to Lodivarman. To-night in this hall the high priest shall wed us, if it is necessary to drag you here by force."

"It will be by force then," said Fou-tan, and, rising, she called to her guard that stood waiting just beyond the doorway.

"By force then," snapped Bharata Rahon, "and you will see how easily it may be done." As he spoke he pointed to the guardsmen entering the audience chamber to escort Fou-tan to her quarters.

"These are not my men," she cried. "Where is Indra Sen? Where are the warriors of my guard?"

"They have been dismissed, Fou-tan," replied Bharata Rahon. "The future King of Pnom Dhek will guard his Queen with his own men."

The Princess Fou-tan made no reply as, surrounded by the soldiers of Bharata Rahon, she left the audience chamber and returned to her own apartment, where a new surprise and indignity awaited her. Her slaves and even her ladies-inwaiting had been replaced by women from the palace of Bharata Rahon.

Her case seemed hopeless. Even the high priest, to whom in her extremity she might have turned for succour, would be deaf to her appeal, for he was bound by ties of blood to the house of Bharata Rahon and would be the willing and eager tool of his kinsman.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

"There is only one," she murmured to herself, "and he is far away. Perhaps, even, he is dead. Would that I, too, were dead." And then she recalled what Bharata Rahon had said of the great danger that menaced Pnom Dhek, and her breast was torn by conflicting fears, which were lighted by no faintest ray of hope or happiness.

All during the long hours that followed, Fou-tan sought for some plan of escape from her predicament; but at every turn she was thwarted, for when she sought to send a message to Indra Sen, summoning him to her, and to other officials of the palace and the state whom she knew to be friendly to her, she found she was virtually a prisoner and that no message could be delivered by her except through Bharata Rahon, nor could she leave her apartment without his permission.

She might have melted into tears in her grief and anger, but the Princess of Pnom Dhek was made of sterner stuff. Through the long hours she sat in silence while slaves prepared her for the nuptial ceremony; and when at last the hour arrived, it was no little weeping queen that was escorted through the corridors of the palace toward the great audience chamber where the ceremony was to be performed, but a resentful, angry little queen with steel in her heart and another bit of shining, sharpened steel hidden in the folds of her wedding gown; and on her lips was a whispered plea to Siva, the Destroyer, to give her the strength to plunge the slim blade into the heart of Bharata Rahon or into her own before morning dawned again.

Through the dark forest from the south moved a hundred elephants, their howdahs filled with grim, half-savage warriors. At their head rode Gordon King chafing at the slow pace which the darkness and the dangers of the jungle imposed upon them.

Riding the howdah with King was an officer who knew well the country around Pnom Dhek and he it was who directed the mahout through the night. Presently he caused the elephant to be halted.

"We are nearing Pnom Dhek now," he said, "and are very close to the point upon the trail which you described to me."

"Bring the torch then and come with me," said King, and together the two men descended to the ground where the officer lighted the flare and handed it to King.

Moving slowly along the trail, the American carefully examined the trees at his left, and within a hundred yards of the point at which they had left the column he halted.

"Here it is," he said. "Go and fetch the warriors, dismounted. Direct the mahouts to hold the elephants here until we return or until they receive further orders from me. Make haste. I shall await you here."

In the great assembly hall of the palace of Beng Kher were gathered the nobles of Pnom Dhek. The captains and the priests were there in glittering armour and gorgeous vestments, their women resplendent in silks and scintillating gems. Upon a raised dais the Prince Bharata Rahon and the Princess Fou-tan were seated upon thrones. The high priest of Siva stood between them, while massed in a half-circle behind them stood the nobles of the house of Bharata Rahon and the glittering warriors, who were their retainers. Among these was none of Fou-tan's allies. Neither Indra Sen nor any other officer or man of her personal guard was in the audience chamber, nor had she seen or heard aught of these since she had been conducted to the audience chamber in the morning.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

She wondered what fate had befallen them, and her heart was filled with fear for their safety, realising as well she might the extremes to which Bharata Rahon might go in his ruthless greed for power.

Before the dais the apsaras were dancing to drum and xylophone, cymbal and flute. The little dancers, nude above the waist, stepped and postured through the long ritual of the sacred dance; but Fou-tan, though her eyes stared down upon them, did not see them. All that she saw was the figure of a warrior in battered brass—a warrior with bronzed skin and clear eyes, who had held her in his arms and spoken words of love into her ear. Where was he? He had told Indra Sen that he would never leave the jungle, that always he would be near; and Indra Sen had repeated his words to Foutan—words that she had cherished in her heart above all the jewels of memory. How close he seemed to-night! Never since he had departed had Fou-tan so felt his presence hovering near, nor ever had she so needed him. With a quick, short sigh that was half a gasp she shook herself into a realisation of the futility of her dreams. Now she saw the apsaras. Their dance was drawing to a close. When it was over the high priest and his acolytes would initiate the ceremony that would make Fou-tan the wife of Bharata Rahon and give Pnom Dhek a new king.

As the girl shuddered at the thought and her fingers closed upon the hilt of the dagger beneath her gorgeous robe, a man stumbled through the darkness of the night toward the outer walls of Pnom Dhek; and behind him, silent as spectres from another world, came five hundred brass-bound men-at-arms.

No light guided them now, for they were approaching the guarded walls of the city; but so indelibly fixed in the memory of Gordon King was this way which he had traversed but once before that he needed no light. Into the mouth of a shallow ravine he led his warriors; and toward its head, where the wall of Pnom Dhek crossed it, he found a little doorway, well hidden by shrubbery and vines. So well hidden was this secret passage, planned by some long dead king, that no bar secured the door that closed its entrance—a precaution made necessary, doubtless to satisfy the requirements of a king who might find it necessary to enter as well as to leave the city in haste and secrecy. But whatever the reason it was a godsend this night to Gordon King as he led his spearmen and his archers beneath the city of Pnom Dhek toward the palace of Beng Kher.

Once safely within the corridor, they lighted their torches; and in the flickering, smoky flame the column moved noiselessly toward its destination. They had gone a considerable distance passing the openings to other corridors and to dark chambers that flanked their line of march, when Gordon King was confronted by the disheartening realisation that he had lost his way. He knew that when Indra Sen and Hamar had led him from the palace they had not passed through any corridor resembling that in which he now found himself. For the moment his heart sank, and his high hopes waned.

To be lost in this labyrinthine maze beneath the palace and the city was not only discouraging but might well prove fatal to his plan and, perhaps, to the safety and the lives of his command. He felt that he must keep the truth from his followers as long as possible, lest the effect upon their morale might prove disastrous; and so he moved boldly on, trusting that chance would guide him to a stairway leading to the level of the ground above.

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

His mind was harassed by unhappy apprehensions concerning Fou-tan. He was obsessed by the conviction that she was in dire and imminent peril, and the thought left him frantic because of his helplessness.

Such was his state of mind when, as he was passing along a corridor flanked on either side by dark and gloomy doorways, he saw that the passageway he was following ended at a transverse corridor. Which way should he turn? He knew that he could not hesitate, and at that moment he heard a voice calling his name from the interior of a dark cell beyond one of the gloomy doorways.

King halted as did the men near him, startled and apprehensive, their weapons ready. King stepped toward the doorway from which the voice had come.

"Who speaks?" he demanded.

"It is I—Indra Sen," replied the voice, and with a sigh of relief that was almost a gasp King stepped quickly to the low doorway.

The light of his torch illuminated a narrow cell, upon the floor of which squatted Indra Sen, chained to the wall.

"May the gods be thanked that you have come, Gordon King," cried the young Khmer officer; "and may they grant that you are not too late to prevent a tragedy."

"What do you mean?" demanded King.

"Fou-tan is to be forced to wed Bharata Rahon tonight," replied Indra Sen. "Perhaps the ceremony already has been performed. All those whose duty it is to defend Fou-tan have been chained in the dungeon here."

"Where is the ceremony to be performed?" demanded King.

"In the great audience chamber," replied Indra Sen.

"Can you lead me there by the shortest route?"

"Take off my fetters and those of my men and I will not only lead you, but we will strike with you in the service of our Princess."

"Good!" exclaimed Gordon King. "Where are your men?"

"Along both sides of this corridor."

To release them all was the work of but a few moments, for willing hands and strong struck off the fetters; and then, directed by Indra Sen, the party moved quickly on to its work. The warriors of Fou-tan's guard had no weapons other than their bare hands and the hatred that was in their hearts, but once within the audience chamber they knew that they would find weapons upon the bodies of their antagonists.

The high priest of Siva stepped forward and, turning, faced Bharata Rahon and Fou-tan. "Arise," he said, "and kneel."

Bharata Rahon stepped from his throne halfturning to await Fou-tan, but the girl sat rigid on her carved chair.

"Come," whispered Bharata Rahon.

"I cannot," said Fou-tan, addressing the high priest.

"You must, my Princess," urged the priest.

"I loathe him: I cannot mate with him."

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

Bharata Rahon stepped quickly toward her. His lips were smiling for the benefit of those who watched from below the dais; but in his heart was rage, and cruel was the grip that he laid upon the gentle wrist of Fou-tan.

"Come," he hissed, "or by the gods you shall be slain, and I shall rule alone."

"Then slay me," said Fou-tan. But he dragged her to her feet; and those below saw his smiling face and thought that he was merely assisting the little Princess, who had been momentarily overcome by the excitement of the occasion.

And then a great hanging parted at the rear of the dais behind the throne, and a warrior stepped out behind the semicircle of those that half-surrounded Bharata Rahon and his unwilling bride. Perhaps some in the audience saw the tall warrior; perhaps at the instant they were moved to surprise, but before they could give an alarm, or before they could realise that an alarm was necessary, he had shouldered his way roughly through the cordon of warriors standing between him and the three principals at the front of the dais, and behind him the doorway through which he had come spewed a torrent of hostile warriors.

Cries of alarm arose simultaneously from the audience and from the warriors of Bharata Rahon who stood upon the dais, and above all in sudden fury burst the war-cry of Lodidhapura.

Simultaneously Bharata Rahon and Fou-tan wheeled about and instantly recognised Gordon King, but with what opposite emotions!

With a curse Bharata Rahon drew his sword. A dozen spearmen leaped toward the rash intruder only to be hurled back by the warriors of Lodidhapura and the unarmed soldiers of Fou-tan's guard, led by Indra Sen.

"Dog of a slave!" cried Bharata Rahon, as the two men stood face to face, and at the same time he swung a heavy blow at King's helmet—a blow that King parried and returned so swiftly that the Khmer prince had no defence ready.

It was a fearful blow that Gordon King struck, for love of a princess and to avenge a king. Down through the golden helmet of the false prince his blade clove into the brain of Bharata Rahon; and as the body lunged forward upon the dais, King swung around to face whatever other antagonist might menace him. But he found himself entirely surrounded by his own warriors, and a quick glance about the audience chamber showed him that his orders had been followed to the letter. So quickly had they moved that at every entrance now stood a company of his brass-bound soldiers.

There had been little resistance, for so sudden had been the attack and so overwhelming the surprise of the men of Pnom Dhek that those in the audience chamber had been completely surrounded by a superior force before many of them had realised what was happening.

Indra Sen and his warriors had succeeded in wresting weapons from the men of Bharata Rahon, and with them King now dominated the situation, at least in the audience chamber; though in the city without were thousands of warriors who might easily overcome them. But this King had foreseen and had no intention of permitting.

Turning toward the surprised men and women in the audience chamber, he raised his hand. "Silence!" he cried. "Let no man raise a weapon against us, and none shall be

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

harmed. I came here not to attack Pnom Dhek but to avenge her King. Beng Kher did not fall in battle; he was stabbed by Bharata Rahon. He is not dead. Beng Kher is still King of Pnom Dhek."

A cheer arose from Indra Sen and his warriors, in which joined many in the audience chamber, for with Bharata Rahon dead they no longer feared him and quickly returned their allegiance to their King.

Fou-tan came close to the tall warrior standing there beside the body of Bharata Rahon and facing the officers and the dignitaries of the court of Beng Kher. She touched him gently. "My Gordon King!" she whispered. "I knew that you were near. I knew that you would come. But tell me again that my father is not dead and that he is safe."

"He is wounded, Fou-tan; but I have left him with honest people who will nurse him, the same who nursed me when I was lost and ill in the jungle. He sent me here to save you from Bharata Rahon, though I would have come without the sending. Here is the priest, Fou-tan, and you are in your wedding-gown. Is it in your heart to deny me again?"

"What would my father say?" she murmured, hesitatingly, and then suddenly she raised her head proudly. "He is not here, and I am Queen!" she exclaimed. "I care not what any man may say. If you will have me, Gordon King, I am yours!"

King turned toward the audience. "The scene is set for a wedding," he said in clear tones. "The priest is here; the bride is ready. Let the ceremony proceed."

"But the groom is dead!" cried one of Bharata Rahon's lieutenants.

"I am the groom," said King.

"Never!" cried another voice. "You are naught but a Lodidhapurian slave."

"He is neither slave nor Lodidhapurian," said Fou-tan. "He is the man of my choice, and to-night I am Queen."

"Never! Never!" shouted many voices.

"Listen!" exclaimed the American. "It is not within your power to dictate, for to-night the Princess Fou-tan is Queen; and I am your conqueror."

"You are already surrounded by the soldiers of Beng Kher," said the partisan of Bharata Rahon who had before spoken. "Several escaped the audience chamber when your men entered, and already they have taken word to the warriors in the barracks. Presently they will come and you and your warriors will be destroyed."

"Perhaps," assented King; "but with us, then, shall die every man in this room, for I hold you as hostages to ensure our safety. If you are wise you will send a messenger at once to order your warriors to return to their barracks." And then to his own warriors he cried: "If a single warrior of Pnom Dhek enters this apartment without my authority, you will fall upon those here and slay them to a man, sparing only the women. And if my word is not sufficient I bring you the authority of your own King," and with that he displayed the King's ring, where all might see it.

Beaten at every turn, the followers of Bharata Rahon were forced to accept the inevitable, while those who had hated him were secretly delighted now that they were assured that both the Princess and the King had vouched for this strange warrior. Then in the great audience chamber of the Khmer King, Beng Kher, Fou-tan the Princess, danc-

PELLUCIDAR: ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD

ing girl of the Leper King, was joined to the man she loved.

That night, for the first time in a thousand years perhaps, the soldiers of Lodidhapura and the soldiers of Pnom Dhek sat at the same board and laughed and joked and swore strange oaths and feasted and drank together; and the soldiers of Lodidhapura bragged of the prowess of their Prince, who single-handed and armed only with javelin had slain My Lord the Tiger; and the soldiers of Pnom Dhek boasted of the beauty of their Princess until presently those who were not sleeping beneath the table were weeping upon one another's brass cuirasses, so that when morning broke it was with aching heads that the soldiers of Lodidhapura climbed into the howdahs upon their great elephants and started back upon their homeward journey.

At the same time a strong force from Pnom Dhek, including many high officials of the court, together with the Princess Fou-tan and Gordon King, mounted upon swift elephants, set out through the jungle toward the dwelling of Che and Kangrey.

Upon the afternoon of the second day they reached their destination. Che and Kangrey and little Uda were overcome by the magnificence of the spectacle that burst suddenly upon their simple and astonished gaze; nor were they entirely free from apprehension until they had made sure that Gordon King was there to protect them.

"How is the patient, Kangrey?" asked King.

The woman shook her head. "He does not mend," she said.

Together Fou-tan and Gordon King, accompanied by the high priest of Siva from Pnom Dhek and several of the highest officers of the court, entered the simple dwelling.

Beng Kher lay stretched upon his mean cot of straw and hides. His eyes lighted as they rested upon Fou-tan, who ran forward and knelt beside him. The old warrior took her in his arms and pressed her to him, and though he was very weak he insisted that she tell him all that had transpired since King had left him to return to Pnom Dhek.

When she had finished, he sighed and stroked her hair; and when he motioned to Gordon King, and the man came and knelt at Fou-tan's side, Beng Kher took their hands in his.

"Siva has been kind to me in my last hour," he said. "He has saved Pnom Dhek and Fou-tan from the traitor, and he has given me a new son to rule when I am dead. All praise be to Siva."

The King, Beng Kher, closed his eyes. A tremor passed through his frame, which seemed suddenly to shrink and lie very still.

Gordon King lifted the weeping Fou-tan to her feet. The highest officer of the Khmer court came and knelt before them. He took the hand of Gordon King in his and pressed it to his lip. "I salute the son of Beng Kher," he said, "the new King of Pnom Dhek."